



**Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) Program Policies and Procedures**  
**As Adopted by the Presbytery of East Iowa**  
**Effective 15 September 2015**

**I. Establishment of the Policy and Delegated Responsibilities**

In its meeting on 15 September 2015, as provided in G-3.0307, the Presbytery of East Iowa (PEIA) established the Commissioned Ruling Elder Policies and Procedures (hereinafter known as CRE Policy) and delegated responsibility for the Program to the Committee for Preparation of Ministry (CPM), the Commission on Ministry (COM), and the Commissioned Ruling Elder Coordinating Team as follows:

- A.** CPM shall be responsible for:
  - 1) Preparation and evaluation of preparedness of Candidates for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CCREs). (Section III, IV, and V).
  - 2) Final assessment and recommendation of CCREs to Presbytery for examination and approval of eligibility to be commissioned to a validated ministry. (Section V E).
  
- B.** The COM shall be responsible for:
  - 1) Determining if a particular ministry meets the criteria specified in the PEIA *Validation of Ministry Policy* and may be classified as a validated ministry in accordance with that policy. (Section VI) (See also Appendix A, *Validation of Ministry Policy*)
  - 2) Oversight, appropriate placement, and commissioning of credentialed EREs. (Section II B, V, and VI)
  - 3) Oversight of CREs during commissioned service. A CRE may serve only in a validated ministry in accordance with G-2.10 and the PEIA CRE Policy. (Section VII – X)

- C.** The **CRE Coordinating Team** shall consist of four to five members, comprised of Teaching and Ruling Elders, representative of the Presbytery, at least one of whom serves on COM and one of whom serves on CPM. The CRE Coordinating Team shall have a moderator elected by its members. The moderator shall be responsible for communicating with CPM and COM moderators and for ensuring that the CRE Coordinating Team's responsibilities are met.

In coordination with CPM and COM, the CRE Coordinating Team is responsible for:

- 1) Establishing and maintaining rolls for all in the program, CCREs, EREs, and CREs.
- 2) Ensuring that opportunities for CRE retreats and other continuing education and fellowship activities are made available for all persons in the program from preparation through being commissioned and post commission. The Team will function in conjunction with CPM and COM.
- 3) The moderator of the CRE Coordinating Team may participate with CPM in the selection of applicants to enter the CRE program.
- 4) The CRE Coordinating Team may have other responsibilities as assigned by CPM and/or COM.

## **II. Definitions**

### **A. Candidate Commissioned Ruling Elder (CCRE)**

A **CCRE** must be:

- 1) An active member in good standing of a PC (USA) church.
- 2) An ordained Ruling Elder in the PC (USA).
- 3) Recommended by the Session of the CCRE's member congregation of the PEIA to the CRE Program.
- 4) Interviewed by the CPM or by a subcommittee designated by CPM.
- 5) Able to articulate a sense of call to serve in Christian ministry and a willingness to express that call as a CRE, to work within the Presbyterian system, and to accept the proper authority of the Presbytery.
- 6) Willing to undertake and complete the basic curriculum of the CRE program in a timely manner.
- 7) Willing to fulfill all other requirements as outlined in this policy.

### **B. Eligible Ruling Elder (ERE)**

An **ERE** is a ruling elder who has been recommended by CPM for examination by the Presbytery and subsequently declared by PEIA as "eligible to be commissioned to a validated ministry," or a ruling elder who has previously been commissioned to a validated ministry but is not presently serving in one.

### **C. Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)**

A **CRE** (G-2.10) is a ruling elder of the PC (USA), who has passed the requirements of the presbytery's CRE Policy, has been declared eligible to be commissioned, and who is presently serving a local commission in a validated ministry. Commissions will be assigned by COM. A commission is valid in one or more congregations, new church development, or other validated ministries of the presbytery designated by COM on behalf of the presbytery.

A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in a particular congregation, or other validated ministry, may continue to be listed as available to serve (ERE), but is not authorized to perform the functions of a commissioned ruling elder until appointed again to a particular validated ministry by COM on behalf of the presbytery.

All CREs are ruling elders in the PC (USA) who have been selected by CPM on behalf of the Presbytery and examined and approved by the Presbytery as detailed in this Policy. They have completed requirements that include: coursework in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. CREs have been examined by the CPM and by the Presbytery as to personal faith, motivation for seeking the commission, and competencies in the areas of instruction mentioned previously. In order to be eligible to be commissioned to a validated ministry, the candidate must demonstrate a proficiency in all areas as detailed in this Policy.

### **III. Process to Enter the CRE Program**

The process for a ruling elder to enter the CRE Program is as follows:

- A.** Consult with your pastor, or if your church is without a pastor, the moderator of session, regarding your interest in the CRE program.
- B.** Complete a written application, Forms A and B, and submit them to CPM. The application forms are attached to this policy and include the applicant writing a brief statement of faith. (See Forms A and B)
- C.** A representative of CPM shall meet with the session of the applicant's church to explain the process including the role expected of the session.
- D.** Have the endorsement of the session of applicant's church. The endorsement Form C is forwarded to the CPM. (See Form C)
- E.** Session of applicant's church assigns a member of the church to be liaison between the applicant, the session, and CPM.
- F.** Have three letters of favorable reference and recommendation, one of which is from a pastor of your church. These letters are forwarded to the CPM.

- G. Be interviewed by members of CPM to evaluate the applicant and make a recommendation to CPM on whether to accept you into the program.
- H. If accepted into the program, successfully pass the course of study and other requirements summarized in this policy.

#### **IV. Participation in the CRE Community**

After a ruling elder is accepted into the program the applicant becomes a CCRE and is expected to be a part of the CRE community. The community consists of CCREs, EREs, and CREs. Members of the community will participate with others in the program in retreats, worship, training, and other fellowship opportunities focused on mutual support, professional development, and spiritual growth. Those who have declared they are retired are encouraged to participate in these activities of the community, but may elect not to do so.

#### **V. Requirements for Preparation**

##### **A. Sense of Call and Relationship with Presbytery**

After an applicant completes the required documentation and CPM affirms the applicant's faith and sense of call to a validated ministry, the CPM shall vote to approve entrance into the program and give the applicant status as a CCRE. Thereafter, CPM shall appoint a liaison for the applicant from CPM. The CPM moderator shall notify the COM moderator, the Stated Clerk of the PEIA, Moderator of CRE Coordinating Team, and the Session of the applicant's home church of acceptance into the CRE program.

##### **B. Course of Study**

To become eligible to be commissioned to a validated ministry the candidate shall successfully complete a course of study provided by the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) or another accredited theological institution approved by CPM. UDTS provides an approved online course of study that meets this requirement. The course of study consists of eight graduate level courses, each taking twelve weeks to complete:

- Introduction to Old Testament
- Introduction to New Testament
- Introduction to Preaching
- Christian Education
- Pastoral Care
- Presbyterian Polity
- Reformed Theology
- Reformed Worship & Sacraments

Candidates are encouraged, but not required, to take a unit in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to further their preparation.

The cost of the courses of study is the responsibility of the candidate.

Prior to taking any of the core courses, UDTS students must complete an Online Learning Course to unfold the nature of distance education. Current information on courses and prices can be found on the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary website: <http://udts.dbq.edu/academics/educationforlaity/>

### **C. Psychological Assessment**

During the first year of coursework, a CCRE shall participate in psychological and career evaluation to assess the CCRE'S suitability for ministry as a CRE. Comprehensive, in-depth evaluation helps a CCRE understand how one's values, interests, and potential and acquired capabilities, as well as personality, fit into the role of a CRE. Midwest Ministry Development Center is recommended to facilitate this consultation. In each case the CCRE, the CCRE's church, and CPM shall share the cost of this consultation. The results of this consultation shall be released to the moderator of CPM and shall be shared with the members of CPM. This material shall be kept confidential. Upon receipt of the evaluation, CPM shall schedule a meeting with the applicant.

### **D. Ongoing Consultation and Assessment**

Subsequent meetings (at least once a year) shall be scheduled as requested by the CPM or the CCRE. Additional requirements may be made of the CCRE in order to enhance the CCRE's education and preparation for ministry. Throughout the course of study, CPM will assess the CCRE's progress and understanding of key subjects and will offer feedback as needed. Additionally, personal growth and overall preparedness for ministry will be assessed regularly.

There is no guarantee that a CCRE will be declared "eligible to be commissioned" or of being commissioned to a validated ministry.

### **E. Final Assessment and Certification**

Upon successful completion of the approved course of study for CRE training by the CCRE, CPM shall satisfy itself concerning the CCRE's personal faith, motives for seeking a commission and the areas of instruction determined by CPM on behalf of the presbytery and in accordance with the *Book of Order* (G-2.1002). Part of this evaluation may be fulfilled by means of a written and/or oral examination and preaching a sermon to CPM. The examination may also include, but may not be limited to, questions from CPM members to determine the CCRE's proficiency in such areas as understanding of, and ability to explain, the Reformed Tradition, the theology of worship and sacrament, as well as the theological significance of scripture, and the ability to relate them to the events of everyday life. In addition, the CCRE shall present a written statement of faith and shall give oral interpretation of that statement of faith and respond to questions from CPM.

Upon satisfactory completion of all requirements of the training process and favorable final assessment and interview, CPM shall recommend to the presbytery that it examine the CCRE for the purpose of approving the candidate as "eligible to be commissioned to a validated ministry" (ERE). The CPM moderator shall report this recommendation to the session of the church of which the CCRE is a member, the Stated Clerk of PEIA, moderator of CRE Coordinating Team, and the COM moderator.

The CCRE shall then sign the Presbytery of East Iowa's Sexual Misconduct policy, signifying that the CCRE has read, understands and will comply with its contents and submit to a background check.

## **VI. Examination by the Presbytery**

Prior to being commissioned to a validated ministry for the first time and with the recommendation of CPM for preparedness to receive a commission, the CCRE shall be examined by the presbytery on his/her personal faith, motivation for seeking a commission, the required areas of instruction determined by CPM on behalf of the presbytery, and his/her statement of faith in accordance with G-2.1002. The presbytery may then declare the ruling elder as "eligible to be commissioned to a validated ministry" (ERE).

## **VII. Commissioning to a Validated Ministry**

- A.** If approved by the presbytery as "eligible to be commissioned to a validated ministry" (ERE), COM, after it determines that the presbytery's strategy for mission in a particular validated ministry requires it or would be enhanced by it, may commission an eligible ruling elder (ERE) to a validated ministry and shall authorize the ERE to perform specific functions within that ministry. Commissioning will normally take place at the site of the ministry.
  
- B.** Within the ministry to which the CRE has been commissioned, the CRE may be authorized by COM to perform one or more of the following services:
  - 1) Prepare and lead worship
  - 2) Provide administrative leadership in this ministry
  - 3) Administer the Lord's Supper only in this validated ministry
  - 4) Administer the Sacrament of Baptism only in this validated ministry
  - 5) Moderate the session of the congregation
  - 6) Have a voice in meetings of presbytery
  - 7) Have a vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as a ruling elder commissioner for purposes of parity)
  - 8) Perform services of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state
  - 9) Officiate funerals
  - 10) Other duties

## **VIII. Continuing Support and Oversight**

The CRE commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of COM through the CRE Coordinating Team on behalf of the Presbytery. A Teaching Elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor by the CRE Coordinating Team on behalf of COM.

The Teaching Elder/Mentor shall be appointed from the nominees submitted by the CRE and/or the Commission on Ministry and/or CRE Coordinating Team. The assigned Teaching Elder shall

not be the CRE's pastor. The mentor should be a good role model for the CRE, approachable and non-judgmental, seeking to listen before giving advice and/or constructive criticism. The CRE and mentor should be in contact at least quarterly. Furthermore, the mentor shall report to the CRE Coordinating Team at least once each year.

A CRE is expected to attend meetings of Presbytery and to engage in regular continuing education.

A CRE shall meet regularly with the CRE Coordinating Team.

A CRE shall be accountable to COM through the CRE Coordinating Team for annual review (G-2.1001).

## **IX. Pastoral Care**

- A.** In exercise of pastoral care, CREs shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing such care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a CRE may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A CRE shall reveal confidential information when the CRE reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person, or when compelled to do so by state law or the Constitution of the PC (USA).
  
- B.** CREs shall be guided by their own sense of compassion, their acquired skills through CRE training, and by the Constitution of the PCUSA (W-6.3000). CREs should be prepared to make referrals to mental health professionals in their communities; they should not attempt to offer specialized care, nor should they attempt to offer counseling beyond a term of three meetings with the same person(s) about the same issue, unless they are licensed counselors over and above their CRE training (W-6.3004).

## **X. Limits of Commission Term**

A commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as determined by COM, the CRE, and the validated ministry. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of any one of the parties.

## **XI. Performance Reviews (G-2.1001)**

The CRE Coordinating Team, on behalf of COM, shall provide for the review of the CRE's ministry annually and report the results to COM. COM may revoke the commission of any CRE who does not abide by the provisions of this policy or whose work is evaluated as not adequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation or other validated ministry.

## **XII. The Commissioning Service (W-4.4003)**

**A.** When a CCRE has progressed to being an ERE and an appropriate placement in a validated ministry has been negotiated, a service of commissioning shall be held. This worship service is a presbytery function usually held at the site of the ERE's validated ministry. During worship, the ERE being commissioned shall be asked the following questions by the Presbytery Moderator or Designee:

- 1) Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- 2) Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
- 3) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
- 4) Will you fulfill your commission in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
- 5) Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
- 6) Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
- 7) Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?
- 8) Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
- 9) Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

### **B. Prayer and Statement**

The ERE, having answered these questions in the affirmative, the moderator shall pray before saying to the ERE (now CRE):

“(Name), you are now a commissioned ruling elder in the service of  
this ministry for the time and in the place set by this presbytery.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”





**Commissioned Ruling Elder Program Application**

**Form A**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Date ordained as an elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Location where ordained \_\_\_\_\_

Current Home Congregation/Location \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Contact Information for Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby affirm that all the above information is true, to the best of my ability, and I understand that upon my enrollment as an Applicant to the CRE process in the Presbytery of East Iowa, I shall be subject to the conditions and requirements of such process. I also understand that enrollment as an applicant in no way guarantees completion of the program or obligation on the part of the Presbytery to guarantee me a commission upon completion of the program.

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Signature

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Date

**Session Endorsement**

Take your completed forms (Form A and Form B) to your pastor, or, if your church is without a pastor, to the moderator of your church's session. This person will talk with you about your interest in the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program. Next, submit Forms A and B to the CPM Moderator.

Once the Moderator or designee has met with your Session to provide orientation to the CRE process, arrange a time (through Session Moderator and/or Clerk of Session) to be interviewed by the Session. Provide the Clerk with Form C (Confidential Session Endorsement Form) which the Clerk will complete after your interview and subsequent Session action on your application. No application will be considered without Form C being submitted to CPM.

**References**

In addition to the minister and session, please list two other people who know you well in a variety of relationships (e.g., another church member, a colleague at work, a teacher, a friend) who will serve as individual references. Duplicate and pass along an additional individual reference form to each, asking that the form be completed and mailed directly to the Presbytery Office. Please list below the persons who will be your individual references.

Name	Address	City/State/Zip Code	Phone



## **Commissioned Ruling Elder Program Application**

### **Form B**

Please answer the following questions. Feel free to adjust spacing or use a separate sheet of paper as needed.

Why are you interested in this program? What motivates you to apply?

What aspects of your present church life do you enjoy the most?

What aspects are the most frustrating?

What does it mean for you to be a “Presbyterian?”

What spiritual gifts and skills do you bring to this program?

In what areas of your life would you like to grow?

What are your current spiritual practices and disciplines?

What are some of your interests/hobbies?

In what community or volunteer service have you been involved?

**Please attach a brief statement of your personal faith.** Describe what you believe about God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and your relationship to God. Include a brief summary of your understanding of the role of Scripture, the Church, and the Sacraments in your life – suggested length: one-half to one page single-spaced, typed.



**Commissioned Ruling Elder Program Application**

**Confidential Session Endorsement**

**Form C**

Primary attention should be given at this time to evaluating the applicant's natural gifts, strength of motivation, and potential for growth. Please note the importance of the Session exercising good judgment in discerning whether this individual seems to be called by God to consider service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Home Church \_\_\_\_\_

*Please respond candidly to the following questions: (You may adjust the spacing or use additional paper as needed.)*

Does the applicant reveal evidence of a vital faith in God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit? If so, how is that faith currently being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, ministry, and mission of the congregation?

Is the applicant's physical health/stamina, emotional well-being, and maturity suitable for becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder?

The following qualities are especially important in Commissioned Ruling Elder: (Please check all items that have been demonstrated by this applicant in the life of your church.)



- Ability to speak publicly and communicate clearly
- Well-developed listening skills
- Leadership Ability
- Commitment to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Ability to relate to various age groups
- Reliability
- Basic Knowledge of the Bible
- Compassion
- Skills in personal relationships
- Ability to keep confidentiality

Are there any reservations the session might have in endorsing this applicant? If so, please describe. (Note: A reservation does *not* disqualify an individual or indicate they are unsuitable for service. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry, however, must rely upon honest and candid evaluations.)

Would the Session be willing to provide any financial assistance for this educational process and/or psychological and career evaluation? (A yes answer to this question does not indicate a financial obligation.)

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The Session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of \_\_\_\_\_ (city) does / does not (please circle) endorse this application for admission to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program of the Presbytery of East Iowa.

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Signature of Clerk of Session

Date

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Signature of Moderator of Session

Date

We have appointed a liaison to this applicant. The liaison's contact information:

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Name

E-Mail

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Mailing Address

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Phone(s) (Home)

(Cell)

(Work)



**Covenant with Commissioned Ruling Elder**

**In the Presbytery of East Iowa**

**Form D**

NAME OF VALIDATED MINISTRY \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF VALIDATED MINISTRY \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CRE \_\_\_\_\_

SERVICE FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

This covenant is considered to be a \_\_\_\_\_ time position and anticipates \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week.

Review of this covenant prior to renewal or termination will be made by the Session and the Commission on Ministry.

This relationship may be terminated prior to expiration with \_\_\_\_\_ days' notice by either party and the concurrence of the Commission on Ministry of PEIA.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CRE (check those that apply to this validated ministry):

- Prepare and lead worship
- Provide administrative leadership for this congregation
- Administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper only in this validated ministry
- Administer the Sacrament of Baptism only in this validated ministry
- Moderate the Session of this congregation
- Have a voice in meetings of the presbytery
- Have a vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as a ruling elder commissioner for the purposes of parity)
- Perform services of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the State
- Officiate funerals
- Other duties: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIFIC DAYS IN MINISTRY (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

COMPENSATION as applicable:

Cash salary: \_\_\_\_\_/weekly, monthly, yearly (circle one)

Medical coverage: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security withheld: \_\_\_\_\_

Travel reimbursement at IRS rate, not to exceed: \_\_\_\_\_

Other ministry cost reimbursement (telephone calls, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Vacation time: \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing education time: \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing education or book allowance: \_\_\_\_\_

Other:

Housing arrangements in the community: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Commissioned Ruling Elder

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presbytery Commission on Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_  
Moderator of Session

Date of Session Action: \_\_\_\_\_