

Presbytery of Middle Tennessee
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training and Oversight Protocol
Approved by the Commission on Ministry
September 8, 2015

Role of Commissioned Ruling Elder

The Book of Order (G-2.1001) says: *When a 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 do any or all of the following:

- Moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned
- Administer the Sacraments
- Officiate at marriages where permitted by state law
- Have a voice in meetings of presbytery
- Vote in presbytery meetings, such vote to be counted as a ruling elder for purposes of parity

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.

Training and Oversight

All candidates will participate in the following in conjunction with their home church pastor, session and/or the Commission on Ministry:

- Mentoring
- Collaboration
- Connection
- Continuing education

Process

1. When a ruling elder expresses interest in becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder, he/she is directed to meet with his/her pastor and session regarding their support.
2. The pastor and session are asked to respond to this request and submit a letter of support regarding the candidate's application.
3. The candidate is also asked to fill out an application form (attached) and submit it to the Commission on Ministry.
4. A conversation will be held with the person or persons who signed the endorsement for the candidate prior to the candidate having a conversation with a representative of the COM.
5. The candidate will initiate a conversation with a representative of the COM prior to beginning study.
6. The candidate is directed to the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS), or other PCUSA-related distance learning program designed specifically for training ruling elders for commissioned service, and approved in advance by the COM.

7. The pastor of the candidate's home church will serve as the candidate's mentor; if the candidate's home church does not have a pastor, the candidate will meet with the Pastoral Care Team to discuss the program, and the Pastoral Care Team will assign a mentor.
8. The mentor and candidate will meet a minimum of two times a year to review the progress of the candidate, and to encourage him/ her in the process.
9. When the candidate has completed the educational requirements, and has a call to serve a congregation, he/she contacts the COM Examinations Task Force to schedule an examination. Documentation of the educational requirements, along with information regarding the call, is provided to the Examinations Task Force. Upon successful completion of the examination, the candidate is commissioned by the Presbytery to particular pastoral service as indicated in the call. A mentor will be appointed for the Commissioned Ruling Elder.
10. If the candidate has completed all educational requirements but does not have a call, an examination can still be scheduled (providing documentation of the educational requirements) in order for the ruling elder to be added to the pulpit supply list.

APPLICATION
(To be completed by the individual applicant)

Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program
Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

This program is guided by the parameters for service, training, and commissioning set forth in the *Book of Order* (G-2.1001). The objective of the program is to provide training for ruling elders who may be granted a local commission from the Presbytery to a particular congregation (or congregations).

Commissioned Ruling Elder may be commissioned to perform any or all of the following functions:

- Moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned
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Personal Information

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: Male: Female

Church Membership

Name of Church:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: ____ _

Name of Pastor: _____

Pastor Telephone Number: _____

Pastor's -mail Address: _____

Date received into church membership: _____

Length of active service in this church: _____

Ordained Offices and Dates of Ordination

Ordained Office

Date of Ordination

Deacon:

Ruling Elder:

Have you been a member of another
denomination? If yes, please list
Name(s) and date(s) of membership

Yes ()

No ()

Please answer the following questions; typewritten answers are preferred.

1. Why are you interested in becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder?
2. What aspects of church life do you like the most?
3. What aspects of church life do you find the most frustrating?
4. What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?
5. What gifts or skills do you bring to this program?
6. What are your current spiritual practices and disciplines?
7. Please provide a brief description of your journey of faith. This should be autobiographical in nature, and offer some insight into your life, providing a context for your decision to apply for training.
8. Please provide a brief statement of your personal faith. Describe what you believe about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and your relationship to them. Include a brief summary of your understanding of the role of Scripture, the church, and the sacraments in your life. Do not worry about using "theological language," write from the heart.

Please list the names and contact information for two persons (NOT immediate family members or your pastor) who know you and can comment on your gifts for ministry as a Commissioned Ruling Elder. Be sure to contact potential references about their participation prior to sending in this form.

References

Name: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Authorization to contact references

(Please sign): I hereby authorize those inquiring into my suitability to be a candidate for
Commissioned Ruling Elder to contact the persons listed above.

Signature:

Date:

Please return to:

Presbytery of Middle Tennessee
ATTN: Commission on Ministry/ CRE
1113 Murfreesboro Road, Suite 106,
#216
Franklin, TN 37064

ENDORSEMENT

(To be completed by the session)

Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

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Name of Applicant: _____

Please respond candidly to the following questions; typewritten answers are preferred.

1. What personal qualities in the applicant are evidence of a vital faith in God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?
2. How is that faith currently being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, ministry, and mission of this congregation?
3. What evidence do you see of a sense of call?
4. What actual and potential talents for ministry as a Commissioned Ruling Elder are evident in this individual?
5. Describe a few situations in the life of your church in which the applicant has demonstrated leadership ability.
6. How would you rate the applicant's physical health/stamina, emotional well-being, maturity, and judgment?
7. Service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder requires great maturity of character, self-discipline, reliability, and commitment to the polity of the PC(USA). Please comment on the applicant's attributes in this area.
8. Describe the applicant's capacities for effective public speaking and demonstration of pastoral care.

9. Describe any reservations the session might have in endorsing this candidate (Note: a reservation does not disqualify an individual or indicates/he is unsuitable for service).

The session of _____ Church (check one):

☐ **DOES endorse this applicant to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.**

☐ **DOES NOT endorse this applicant to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.**

☐ **DOES endorse, WITH RESERVATIONS, this applicant to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. (Please list reservations.)**

Clerk of Session

Date

Please return to:

Presbytery of Middle Tennessee
ATTN: Committee on Ministry/ CRE
1113 Murfreesboro Road, Suite 106
#216
Franklin, TN 37064
Or email to: Stated Clerk,
sc.midtennpres@gmail.com