

**Presbytery of Middle Tennessee**  
**Commissioned Lay Pastor Training and Oversight Protocol**  
*Approved by the Committee on Ministry, April 13, 2010*

**Beginning Questions:**

In the General Assembly's CLP Handbook they recommend the following questions be considered in preparing a training program for Commissioned Lay Pastors:

- 1) What ministry/mission opportunities within our presbytery might Commissioned Lay Pastors perform?
- 2) What type of training would equip CLPs to fulfill our strategy for mission in local congregations?
- 3) Should we have different admission requirements for people interested in the training but who do not intend to become CLPs?
- 4) What will be the standards for admitting people into the training program? And who will be responsible for oversight of those in the program?
- 5) To whom will the participants in the training program be responsible?
- 6) What evaluation process do we need during and at the end of the training process and who will conduct it?

**Our Presbytery's Commissioned Lay Programs**

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee currently is blessed by the ministry of 15 Commissioned Lay Pastors and an additional 19 Lay Pastors. They serve small congregations throughout the Presbytery and fill a valuable role in extending the ministry of Word and Sacrament to congregations that might not otherwise enjoy a continuity of leadership.

On average less than half a dozen inquiries are made each year from those interested in becoming Commissioned Lay Pastors. These numbers suggest that we would do well to create a support network and facilitate ongoing training to support this ministry within our Presbytery.

**Role of Commissioned Lay Pastor:**

The *Book of Order* says: The Commissioned Lay Pastor is an elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who is 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. This commission is valid only in one or more congregations, new church development, or other validated ministries designated by the presbytery. (G-14.0801a) When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a Commissioned Lay Pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in (1)-(6) below.

- (1) Administer the Lord's Supper.
- (2) Administer the Sacrament of Baptism.
- (3) Moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of and when invited by the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery.
- (4) Have a voice in meetings of presbytery.
- (5) Have a vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as an elder commissioner for purposes of parity).
- (6) Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state. (G-14.0801c)

## **Training and Oversight Proposal**

With the number of inquiries being so low it seems an inordinate use of resources to create a training program here when high quality online possibilities for education exist. What does seem necessary is a plan for mentoring, collaboration, connection, and continuing education. Following is the plan approved by the Committee on Ministry:

1. An oversight committee from the COM is created to administer this plan.
2. When an elder expresses in interest in becoming a Commissioned Lay Pastor they are directed to meet with their pastor and Session regarding their support.
3. The pastor and Session are asked to respond to this request and submit a letter of support regarding the candidate's application. (attached)
4. The candidate is also asked to fill out an application form (attached) and submit it to the COM's CLP Team.
5. The candidate is directed to the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) , or other PCUSA Seminary distance learning program designed specifically for training Lay Pastors.
6. A pool of pastor/mentors is solicited from the Presbytery so that each candidate may have the benefit of a local pastor with whom to be in conversation and prayer during the education process.
7. The candidate is matched with a mentor who covenants to meet a minimum of two times a year to check on the progress of the candidate and encourage him or her in the process.
8. When the candidate has completed the educational requirements from UDTS, and can show documentation to that effect, they contact the COM examinations committee and an examination is scheduled. Upon successful completion of the examination and extension of a call, the candidate is commissioned to serve a congregation.

An annual gathering of CLPs for Middle Tennessee would be planned for the purpose of:

- Connecting with one another and sharing common concerns and learnings
- Connecting with mentors
- Continuing education- a keynote speaker would address the gather on a topic of interest

**APPLICATION**  
**(To be completed by the individual applicant)**

**Commissioned Lay Pastor 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-14.0801). The objective of the program is to provide training for elders who may be granted a local commission from the Presbytery to a particular congregation (or congregations) Commissioned Lay Pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in (1)-(6) below.

- (1) Administer the Lord's Supper.
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***Personal***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:    ( ) Male    ( ) Female

***Church Membership***

Name of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date received into membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of active service in this church: \_\_\_\_\_

Ordained offices held and dates of ordination: ( ) Deacon \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Elder \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been a member of another denomination? ( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, please list names and dates of membership \_\_\_\_\_

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***Please answer the following questions. Feel free to use a separate sheet of paper as necessary. Typewritten answers are preferred.***

Why are you interested in becoming a Commissioned Lay Pastor?

What aspects of church life do you like the most?

What aspects of church life do you find the most frustrating?

What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?

What gifts or skills do you bring to this program?

What are your current spiritual practices and disciplines?

***Please write a brief description of your journey in faith.*** This should be autobiographical in nature and offer the reader some insight into your life, providing a context for your decision to apply for training.

***Please write 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.

***References***

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 Lay Pastor. *Be sure to contact potential references about their participation prior to sending in this form.*

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

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Authorization to contact references*

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

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(Applicant's signature)

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(Date)

*Please return to:*

**Presbytery of Middle Tennessee  
ATTN: CLP Program  
318 Seaboard Lane, Suite 205  
Franklin, TN 37067**

**ENDORSEMENT**  
**(To be completed by the session)**

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**Presbytery of Middle Tennessee**

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**Name of Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_

***Please respond candidly to the following questions. You may use additional paper as . Typewritten responses are preferred.***

What personal qualities in the applicant are evidence of a vital faith in God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?

How is that faith currently being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, ministry, and mission of this congregation?

What evidence do you see of a sense of call?

What actual and potential talents for ministry as a Commissioned Lay Pastor are evident in this individual?

Describe a few situations in the life of your church in which the applicant has demonstrated leadership ability.

How would you rate the applicant's physical health/stamina, emotional well-being, maturity, and judgment.

Service as a Commissioned Lay Pastor 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.

Describe the applicant's capacities for effective public speaking and demonstration of pastoral care.

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

*The session of \_\_\_\_\_ Church*

*Check one:*

- DOES endorse this application for admission to the Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.***
- DOES NOT endorse this application to the Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.***
- DOES endorse, WITH RESERVATIONS, this application to the Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. (List reservations.)***

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Signature of session representative)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Date)*

***Please return to:***

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318 Seaboard Lane, Suite 205  
Franklin, TN 37067**