

MISSOURI UNION PRESBYTERY

Manual for Commissioned Ruling Elders Approved 8-23-2022

Information about the Program in Missouri Union Presbytery

- **Who and what is a Commissioned Ruling Elder?** Page 2
 - Introduction to the Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)
- **What is the training program?** Page 3
 - Classes and proposed schedule and responsibilities
- **Who Are CRE Mentors and What Are Their Duties** Page 5
 - Guidelines for Mentors
- **What are the ethical standards and Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Presbytery?** Available on MUP website
 - These standards apply to all persons in the presbytery

Enrollment Forms:

- **Application to the CRE Program** Pages 7-10
- **Session Endorsement Form** Pages 11-14
- **Pastor/Moderator Endorsement Form** Pages 15-18
- **Personal Reference Form** Pages 19-20

Who and what is a Commissioned Ruling Elder?

The Commissioned Ruling Elder is an extension of the rich Presbyterian heritage of educated clergy and leadership. By definition in the Book of Order: “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-2.1001)

It is expected that the candidate for commissioning will have been an active member of the local church, which will be endorsing the candidate, and will have been on active service as an elder for at least one year previous to making application. Prior to being accepted as a candidate in the CRE program, the applicant is responsible to see that all of the following steps are completed and all necessary papers are in the hands of the moderator of the CRE Committee:

1. Completion of the application to the CRE program.
2. Completion of the Session Endorsement Form.
3. Completion of the Pastor/Moderator Endorsement Form.
4. Completion of three Personal Reference Forms.

After these forms have been received by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), the committee will schedule a time to conduct a formal personal interview with the candidate. If tentatively approved by the CPM, the following additional steps are required:

1. Candidate will contact the General Presbyter to undergo a formal background check through the Presbytery. The fee will be paid by the Presbytery.
2. Candidate will undergo a thorough psychological review through an appropriate testing site as determined by the CPM. The fee will be split one-third by the CPM, one-third by the Candidate, and one-third by the Session which endorses the candidate to the CRE program.

After training and successful completion of a written and oral examination by the CPM, the candidate is recommended to the Committee on Ministry to be commissioned. This commission can be for a period up to three years with the option for renewal upon approval by the Committee on Ministry and the Presbytery. If a CRE is commissioned to his/her own church he/she will not serve on the Session through the duration of his/her commission.

Specific requirements may vary but are outlined in 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 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.

What is the training program?

The Presbyterian tradition of educated clergy extends to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program. Missouri Union Presbytery normally requires a two-year program through an approved seminary, such as the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, to sufficiently train a CRE. We expect this program to be completed in five years or less, with extensions granted one year at a time up to a maximum of seven years. The process begins with the completion of the application, recommendations by the Session and the Pastor/Moderator of the applicant's church, and references from three persons who know the applicant well and have knowledge of his/her potential for ministry and service in the Presbytery. When all of the necessary forms are received by the Committee, the applicant will undergo a thorough initial interview with the Committee. If favorably received, a mentor, assigned from the members of the CPM, and the next two steps take place before the process can begin.

Every candidate shall be required to undergo a background check prior to formal admission to the CRE program. This check is conducted by a professional agency and is required by all persons entering employment within the Presbytery. The candidate must contact the General Presbyter who will provide the candidate the web site and codes necessary to complete the check. The cost for this is paid for by the Presbytery, and the results will be sent to the General Presbyter who will forward them to the Moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). If the results are satisfactory, the following testing and interviews will be scheduled.

Every candidate shall also be required to undergo a psychological review prior to formal admission to the CRE program. After the candidate has been interviewed by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and satisfactorily passed the background check, he/she will be referred to an appropriate testing site. The cost for these services will be paid one-third by the Presbytery, one-third by the church which has endorsed the candidate to the CRE program, and one-third by the candidate.

The General Assembly Manual of Ethics and the Presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Policy are required reading for the potential candidate, and are available on the MUP website. One of the classes generally required for commissioning is a course in professional ethics and ethical behavior. The candidate must be familiar with, and assent to, the Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Courses from a Presbyterian Church (USA) Seminary are strongly encouraged. Others may be available through a Seminary, a Synod or Presbytery training event, or at a study retreat approved by the Committee. An annual transcript shall be provided to the Committee.

The primary focus of most training events and classes should concentrate on small church ministry. If the candidate is unable to attend courses as they are available, the candidate, the mentor, and the CPM will work together to help provide mutually acceptable alternatives.

The Bible Content Examination may be taken several times: Within the candidate's first year of study and again near the end of the candidate's completion of the course prior to commissioning. The Bible Content Examination shall be 100 multiple choice questions more or less roughly divided into the following sections: the Pentateuch, Historical Books, Prophets, Psalms and Wisdom Literature, Gospels, Acts, Pauline Literature, and Other New Testament Literature. A score of 70 or lower will require additional concentrated study in the area of weakness and retaking the exam until it is completed successfully.

In addition to the basic course requirements, the candidate will provide an exegetical paper and a sermon based on the study of a passage. This sermon should be taped and included with the completed examination and provided to the Moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM).

After the CPM members review the exam, the committee will schedule a meeting with the candidate. This final meeting will consist of a review of the written examination, and the exegetical paper and sermon. This review may also include courses the candidate has taken, lessons learned, practical ministry experiences, and any other areas of study and ministry.

Basic course requirements appear in the box on the following page. Additional areas of study may be suggested and required by the CPM. There will be much home study required as well, especially in areas of Bible study and Book of Order studies. Other books on areas of ministry will be suggested and may be required. We also strongly encourage practical, hands-on experience in a wide variety of areas, and encourage "shadowing" a Minister of Word and Sacrament or another CRE to become ever more aware of the special and unique Calling that is the Ministry.

➤ **Basic Course Requirements**

The CPM normally sponsors an annual training event for the candidates, which may also be opened to other members and friends of the Presbytery. The Committee may also sponsor an occasional homecoming event and get-together for all candidates and other CREs. Credit for meeting the basic course requirements may be granted for previous courses taken after the candidate submits transcripts, grades, and other pertinent papers will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Reformed Theology	Pastoral Care	Bible Studies, both Old and New Testament
Presbyterian Polity	Preaching	Christian Education
Presbyterian Worship and Sacraments		

CRE Mentors and Their Duties

Mentors provide a vital link for candidates in the CRE training program between the academic classroom setting and practical service in the local churches. The role of mentor is to provide an objective, listening ear, to act as a source of information and encouragement, to provide professional and spiritual nurture, and to function as part of the training team.

The mentor also serves as the primary liaison between the candidate and the Missouri Union Presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The mentor also helps the candidate to be aware of the five-year limit for completion of the program and is the channel of communication between the committee and the candidate if adjustments and changes become necessary.

Each candidate shall be assigned a mentor who is a member of the CPM. Mentors will be assigned to work with a candidate at the beginning of the training process and that same mentor will ordinarily see the candidate through to commissioning. Because CPM membership changes every year, and persons are allowed to serve on the CPM Committee only a total of six years, it may be necessary for a new mentor to be assigned when the current mentor rotates off the committee. In rare cases, that person may be allowed to continue as a mentor, especially if the process is near completion. At the request of either the mentor or the candidate the Committee may, after evaluation of the request, assign a different mentor.

After commissioning by the Presbytery as a CRE, the Presbytery Committee on Ministry will assign a Minister of Word and Sacrament to be both a mentor and supervisor.

➤ **The Candidate / Mentor Covenant Process:**

The candidate in the CRE program is responsible to initiate and maintain contact with the mentor. The mentor is responsible to be available to the candidate as much as possible and as often as is necessary by telephone contact, written communication, email, and in personal face-to-face meetings. Both are responsible to the CPM and Missouri Union Presbytery to help fulfill all of the requirements with the goal of commissioning and service in the church.

Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program
Training Program Application

➤ **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Name:

Mailing Address:

Home Phone:

Work Phone (If you can receive calls):

Cell Phone:

Email:

Occupation / place of employment

➤ **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Formal Education: List academic institutions attended, degrees earned, start with High School

School / Location	Years Attended / Degree Date	Diploma or Degree	Area of Study or Major / Minor

Continuing Education

School / Location	Year Attended	Diploma, Certificate	Area of Study

➤ **CHURCH BACKGROUND**

Year of Ordination as Elder:

Year of Baptism:

Year of Confirmation / Public Profession of Faith:

Date received as an active member of your current congregation:

Other churches where you have been a member:

List below areas you are (or have been) involved with the life and mission of the church; as both participant and leader. Please identify involvement in Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly.

Area of involvement	Current	Participant	Leader

➤ **HELP US GET TO KNOW YOU**

Why are you interested in this program? What motivates you to apply? What is your sense of God’s Call?

What informal learning experiences will help you in this program?
(Travel, conferences, seminars, etc.)

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

What aspects of your present church life are most frustrating?

What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?

What 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 hobbies and interests?

In what community or volunteer services have you been involved?

➤ **FAITH STATEMENT**

Please attach 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. (Suggested length: ½ page to 1 page single-spaced, typed.)

➤ **PASTOR/MODERATOR ENDORSEMENT**

Take your completed application form and Statement of Faith to your pastor, or if your church is without a pastor, to the moderator of your Session. The minister will talk with you about your interest in the CRE Program. He/She will take your application to the Session of your church. No application will be considered without a pastor/moderator's endorsement.

➤ **SESSION ENDORSEMENT**

After you have met with the pastor/moderator, request a meeting with the Session of your church. They will review your application with you before filling out their endorsement of you. No application will be considered without the endorsement of your Session.

➤ **PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW**

Every candidate must be interviewed and tested for suitability for service by a qualified person chosen by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Results of this testing and interview will not be shared with anyone but the candidate and the Committee.

➤ **INDIVIDUAL REFERENCES**

In addition to the Pastor and Session endorsements, please list three (3) additional persons who know you well in a variety of relationships (such as another church member, a colleague at work, a teacher, a friend) who will serve as individual references for you. Please print or type the names of the people who will be your references below. Sign the waiver on the application on page 21 of this Manual, copy, and send/give to the people you have chosen. They should send the completed forms to the address at the bottom of the form. By signing the application below, you authorize the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to contact these references.

Name	Address	City and State	Phone

➤ **STATEMENT OF CONSENT AND COVENANT**

I am applying for admission to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program of Missouri Union Presbytery. If accepted, I hereby commit myself to participate fully in the schedule of activities and assignments to the best of my ability. I understand that I must attend courses, schedule and attend meetings with my mentor, and fulfill all other requirements set by the CPM as normal parts of the program. Failure to comply with the guidelines outlined in this manual will result in a review by the CPM and may be grounds for removal from the CRE Program.

I understand that the successful completion of this course will allow me to be eligible to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder in Missouri Union Presbytery and with specific congregations pending a Call and a Commission through the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry.

SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

Please mail the completed application and faith statement to:
 Moderator, CPM (Committee on Preparation for Ministry)
 c/o Missouri Union Presbytery
 3236 Emerald Lane, Suite 500
 Jefferson City, MO 65109

Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program
Session Endorsement Form

Primary attention at this time should be given to evaluating the applicant's natural gifts, quality of commitment, strength of motivation, sense of Call, and potential for growth. Each of these issues will be pursued at greater depth on a continuing basis.

The Session should note that the Committee on Preparation for Ministry must rely upon the Session, the Moderator, and the Applicant to exercise good judgment in discerning whether this individual seems to be Called by God to consider service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder in this Presbytery.

NAME OF APPLICANT: _____

Please respond candidly to the following questions. You may attach additional paper as needed.

- 1 As you prayerfully consider this applicant, what personal qualities are evidenced of a vital faith in God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?

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

- 3 What evidence do you see of a sense of Call?

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

9 The following qualities are especially important for Commissioned Ruling Elders. Please check all those which you think are demonstrated by this applicant in the life of your church. Please comment on these qualities, as your comments will help the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

_____ Ability to communicate publicly, in a language appropriate to the congregation served.

_____ A demonstrated basic knowledge of the content of Scripture.

_____ Reliability.

_____ Leader in the Church.

_____ Compassion.

_____ Skills in personal relationships.

_____ Well developed listening skills.

_____ Ability to relate to various age groups.

_____ Ability to keep confidentiality.

10 Describe any reservation(s) the Session may have in endorsing this applicant. Please know that a reservation does not necessarily disqualify an individual or indicate they are unsuitable for service. The CPM, however, must rely upon your honest and candid evaluation.

The Session of the _____ Church
in action taken during a Session meeting and recorded in the permanent records of the church
on (date) _____

_____ **DOES** endorse this applicant for admission in the Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

_____ **DOES NOT** endorse this applicant for admission in the Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

Signature of Clerk of Session: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Moderator of Session: _____ Date: _____

Please mail this completed form to:
Moderator, CPM (Committee on Preparation for Ministry)
c/o Missouri Union Presbytery
3236 Emerald Lane, Suite 500
Jefferson City, MO 65109

Missouri Union Presbytery

Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

Pastor / Moderator Endorsement Form

Primary attention at this time should be given to evaluating the applicant's natural gifts, quality of commitment, strength of motivation, sense of Call, and potential for growth. Each of these issues will be pursued at greater depth on a continuing basis.

The Moderator should note that the Committee on Preparation for Ministry must rely upon the Moderator, the Session, and the Applicant to exercise good judgment in discerning whether this individual seems to be Called by God to consider service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder in this Presbytery.

NAME OF APPLICANT: _____

Please respond candidly to the following questions. You may attach additional paper as needed

- 1 As you prayerfully consider this applicant, what personal qualities are evidenced of a vital faith in God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?
- 2 How is that faith currently being expressed through the applicant's participation in the worship, ministry and mission of this congregation?
- 3 What evidence do you see of a sense of Call?

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

9 The following qualities are especially important for Commissioned Ruling Elders. Please check all those which you think are demonstrated by this applicant in the life of your church. Please comment on these qualities, as your comments will help the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

_____ Ability to communicate publicly, in a language appropriate to the congregation served.

_____ A demonstrated basic knowledge of the content of Scripture.

_____ Reliability.

_____ Leader in the Church.

_____ Compassion.

_____ Skills in personal relationships.

_____ Well developed listening skills.

_____ Ability to relate to various age groups.

_____ Ability to keep confidentiality.

10 Describe any reservation(s) you may have in endorsing this applicant. Please know that a reservation does not necessarily disqualify an individual or indicate they are unsuitable for service. The CPM, however, must rely upon your honest and candid evaluation.

I, the Pastor / Moderator of the _____ Church

_____ **DO** endorse this applicant for admission in the Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

_____ **DO NOT** endorse this applicant for admission in the Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

Signature of Pastor / Moderator _____ Date: _____

Please mail this completed form to:

Moderator, Committee on Preparation of Ministry (CPM)
c/o Missouri Union Presbytery
3236 Emerald Lane, Suite 500
Jefferson City, MO 65109

Missouri Union Presbytery
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program
Personal Reference Form

NAME OF APPLICANT: _____

I, the applicant, do _____ do not _____ waive the right to review this form according to the privacy act of 1994.

Signed _____

REFERENCE FORM

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Relationship to Applicant _____

How Long Have You Known The Applicant? _____

The following qualities are important for Commissioned Ruling Elders.
Please rate each one 1 through 5 with 1 being less evident in the applicant and 5 being more evident in the applicant. Please make comments as you wish.

___ Ability to communicate publicly, in a language appropriate to the congregation served.

___ Demonstrates evidence of what he/she believes

___ Reliability

___ Works well with others

___ Compassion

___ Skills in personal relationships

___ Well-developed listening skills

___ Ability to relate to various age groups

___ Ability to keep confidentiality

Any additional comments about the applicant which will help the CPM evaluate his/her suitability for becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder would be greatly appreciated.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please send this completed form to:
Moderator, CRE Committee
c/o Missouri Union Presbytery
3236 Emerald Lane, Suite 500
Jefferson City, MO 65109