



## **PRESBYTERY OF LOS RANCHOS**

## **Committee on Ministry (COM) Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) Policy June 2020**

### **PRESBYTERY VISION:**

“To be a community of flourishing congregations and partnerships that joyfully participate in God’s redemptive work through Jesus Christ in the world.”

### **PURPOSE OF CRE’S:**

The Book of Order, G-2.10 outlines the process for a ruling elder to be commissioned to a particular ministry in a particular church or location. Our policy is to spell out the particular requirements and steps necessary for such a commission in Presbytery of Los Ranchos. CRE’s in particular situations can help our community of faith flourish and better participate in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in the world.

CRE’s are not meant to replace qualified teaching elders or to diminish their role. The need for well-prepared and educated clergy are the bedrock of the Reformed Tradition. Yet, in today’s changing world the church, too, is changing. Pastor’s may not be available in every setting or specialized ministries may benefit from specifically trained ruling elders. We intend to determine those settings and ensure well-prepared leaders for the variety of ministries in our presbytery.

### **STEPS TO BECOMING A CRE:**

#### **CRE CANDIDATE:**

- 1) Ruling elder must discern a call to pastoral service and begin a journey of verifying and confirming her or his sense of call. This sense of call should be discussed openly and honestly with the pastor and session of their church.
- 2) After time to prayerfully consider options like gifts, abilities, hopes, finances etc., the CRE candidate, pastor and session assess these options and determine whether to proceed toward commissioning. The seeker may even choose to take a seminary class to confirm ability and interest.
- 3) When the session and candidate agree to proceed, they should contact COM and inform COM of their interest. COM will provide other things to consider and initial forms to fill out that will more fully determine a plan to accomplish the candidate’s goals. These forms should be completed and filed with COM.

### **COM STEPS:**

- 1) Submitted forms will be reviewed and a COM member will be assigned to interview the CRE candidate. After determining the application should continue, COM will meet with CRE candidate, pastor and session representative to determine the next steps in preparation and commissioning.
- 2) After the preparation plan is approved, the CRE Candidate will complete the preparation under the supervision of a COM-assigned teaching elder as mentor/supervisor.
- 3) The CRE Candidate and mentor will regularly report progress to COM and when complete, COM will examine the candidate’s personal statement of faith, motives for seeking commission, and success in areas of instruction. A ministry position description and any financial arrangements will also be reviewed and approved.

- 4) Upon successful examination, the candidate will appear at a stated Presbytery meeting to be approved as a CRE. This action will be part of the COM report so the candidate will not be examined by the Presbytery but will be introduced. At this meeting the presbytery will pray for the new CRE and form an administrative commission to work with the session to oversee the commission service.

#### COMMISSIONING:

- 1) A commissioning service will be held at the church or ministry to be served at a time determined by the session and presbytery moderator or his or her delegate who will ask commissioning questions of candidate.
- 2) During the service, the Word must be preached, prayers offered, and commissioning questions spelled out in W-4.403 & 404 (using i.4 question for CRE.) A laying on of hands by ordained members of the church is also appropriate.
- 3) CRE will continue to be assigned a mentor and supervisor for the first year of service or as long as COM determines it necessary and helpful. Annual review forms will be submitted to COM.

#### DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRE:

The presbytery, through COM, and in consultation with the session, will determine the strategy for the mission the church requires and the CRE may be authorized to perform any or all of the following ministries:

- a. Administer the Lord's Supper,
- b. Administer the Sacrament of baptism,
- c. Moderate the session of church to which commissioned when invited by moderator of session or appointed by presbytery.
- d. Have a voice at presbytery,
- e. Have a vote at presbytery,
- f. Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by session and allowed by state.

The commission may be valid for up to three years and is renewable. CRE will be reviewed annually by COM.

#### PREPARATION AND FORMATION:

Working in ministry is more than a job. It requires specific knowledge, pastoral sensitivity, spiritual gifts and mature insight. It is more than can be learned in any classroom. It takes prayer, discipline, and trusted support of experienced pastors and lay leaders. The CRE candidate should take the necessary time to complete the education, develop a deepening prayer life and build a supportive system of trusted advisors. COM determines that this process may take a year to 18 months. Of course, the time available for individual candidates to complete could vary.

Topics in which the CRE candidate will need to be competent, include:

Bible,  
Reformed theology and Sacraments,  
Presbyterian polity,  
Preaching and worship leadership,  
Pastoral care,  
Teaching, and  
Sexual misconduct and boundaries training.

It is also important that CRE's continue this formation and education process, as pastors do, with regular continuing education study leave.