

**PRESBYTERY OF GENESEE VALLEY  
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

**Policy for Commissioned Ruling Elders**

**Overview**

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley works to provide the churches of the Presbytery with qualified ruling elders who may serve in specific situations as Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs). A special ministry team created by the Committee on Ministry is responsible for the selection, training, examination, commissioning, and oversight of the Commissioned Ruling Elder.

The Commissioned Ruling Elder is an elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who is granted a local commission by a presbytery valid only in one or more congregations, new church developments, or other validated ministries designated by the presbytery.

A Commissioned Ruling Elder may be commissioned by the Presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, provide for their nurture and service. The functions a CRE *may* be commissioned to in certain circumstances are:

1. The pulpit supply list
2. Administering the Lord's Supper
3. Administering the Sacrament of Baptism
4. Moderating the Session of the congregation
5. Having voice in meetings of Presbytery
6. Having vote in meetings of Presbytery
7. Performing services of Christian marriage

Ruling elders are prepared for their commissioning by the CRE Oversight Team by instruction, training, and examination in:

Bible	Spirituality
Reformed Theology	Church Administration
Presbyterian Polity	Professional Ethics
Preaching	Church Dynamics
Worship and Sacraments	Christian Education
Pastoral Care	(Field Education Seminars)

After commissioning the Oversight Team is responsible for:

1. Appointing mentors
2. Annual review and renewal
3. Continuing Education

**Some Appropriate Settings for Commissioned Ruling Elders**

- Where the congregation has potential for vitality in ministry, but resources are too limited to call a full time Teaching Elder or if a Teaching Elder cannot be secured in a temporary position, a CRE may be considered
- As a part of a ministry team in situations where the services of a CRE would enhance the work of a staff, i.e., a midsize congregation needs additional part-time pastoral assistance; a congregation is looking for leadership for a specific project; a new worship service has been added; in a transition time from the ending of an Associate Pastor call

- In a situation where the pastor is unable to serve for an extended period of time due to illness, sabbatical leave, military deployment or other such reasons
- Where a congregation is in a search process for an interim pastor
- In a Presbytery validated ministry
- As a pulpit supply preacher

### **Strategy for Commissioning CREs to the Pulpit Supply List**

CREs apply to COM for placement on the pulpit supply list and the Presbytery does the commissioning. COM, through its CRE Oversight Team, serves as the supervisor of the CRE pulpit supply preachers.

Because churches without a pastor often need pulpit supply preachers who can also administer the sacraments. Therefore, being commissioned to the pulpit supply list includes authorization to:

1. Preach
2. Lead worship
3. Administer the Sacrament of Lord's Supper when invited by the Session
4. Administer the Sacrament of Baptism when invited by the Session

Under no circumstances may a CRE commissioned to the pulpit supply list perform marriages.

The CRE pulpit supply preacher may serve up to four successive Sundays in one congregation. Longer periods of service require a CRE pastoral contract.

### **Strategy for Deploying CREs in Churches**

CREs are called to serve the local church through a process of joint discernment. A Covenant Agreement is created by the CRE, Session and COM in which the CRE will be compensated at a rate approved annually by Presbytery. The term of service shall ordinarily be for a period of up to twelve (12) months with a review at the end of the first six months. The Covenant Agreement may be renewed annually.

Commissioned Ruling Elders will be under the supervision of the COM through the CRE Oversight Team. A mentor pastor will be appointed by the Oversight Team and shall provide care, advice and support of the CRE through regular meetings. Reports will be submitted to the Oversight Team upon request.

The CRE, mentor, Session representative and COM liaison shall meet after the first six (6) months to determine if contract revisions are needed.

Presbytery authorizes COM to act between Presbytery meetings on behalf of Presbytery to approve contracts between CRE candidates and churches so that the CRE may begin service. The CRE shall not perform marriages or moderate Session until the formal commissioning by Presbytery.

### **Compensation Guidelines for Commissions to Congregations**

The compensation guidelines of CREs are approved annually by the Presbytery and can be found on the CRE Terms of Call worksheet.

For CREs to be treated as pastors with regard to IRS filings, they must be commissioned to perform all six functions (both sacraments, moderate, voice and vote in Presbytery, and marriage). For CREs to participate in denominational benefits (pension, medical, AD&D) they must be commissioned to service of 20 or more hours per week. If the CRE does not meet all of these IRS guidelines, then he/she will be considered as any other lay employee for normal payroll withholding taxes.

Cash salary compensation is to be based on 80% of the Presbytery's minimum annual cash salary. Cash salary payments will be prorated for weekly hours contracted between the CRE and the particular church. The presbytery recognizes that a typical pastoral workweek is 48 hours.

Housing allowances or manse may be negotiated between the CRE, Session and COM.

Other expenses: Churches are required to provide continuing education allowances and study leave time, travel and professional expenses, and vacation as listed on the CRE Terms of Call.

**Compensation Guidelines for commissions to the Pulpit Supply List**

Stipend and mileage shall be at the rate recommended by the Presbytery for all pulpit supply occasions for member churches.

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