
COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA

Date

_____ PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WHAT IS A CRE/CLP?

- **“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” (G-2.1001).**
 - **Functions CREs may perform**
 - **moderate the session of the congregation to which they are commissioned, administer the Sacraments, officiate at marriages where permitted by state law, and other pastoral duties such as worship leadership, preaching, pastoral care, etc.**
 - **The Book of Order states that a person who seeks to be commissioned for particular pastoral service as defined in 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” (G- 2.1002).**
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PROCESS OVERVIEW

- **According to this process set forth by the Presbytery of Florida, preparation to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) involves two phases: exploration and discipleship.**
 - **These two phases are designed to explore the call, evaluate the gifts, and support the preparation of those who are personally examining their sense of call to ministry as a CRE or have been encouraged by the faith community to consider the possibility that God is calling them to that particular ministry.**
 - **Guided by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), commissioned by the Committee on Ministry (COM).**
 - **Ruling elders are ordinarily not eligible to serve as CREs in their own churches.**
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PREPARATION

- **The CPM shall foster and assess the individual's development in five key areas:**
 - **Education for Ministry**
 - **Spiritual Development**
 - **Interpersonal relations**
 - **Personal Growth**
 - **Professional Development**
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MENTOR

- **Each prospective Commissioned Ruling Elder will be assigned a mentor from the CPM who shall keep regular communication with the prospective CRE throughout the preparation process as per the description of mentors below.**
 - **When a person is approved as an explorer, the CPM shall assign a Minister or Ruling Elder in good standing from another congregation within the presbytery to be a mentor for that person.**
 - **The mentor shall build a relationship of trust and understanding with the explorer and shall consult with the explorer in relation to the five qualities that are listed above.**
 - **Normally the relationship between the mentor and the prospective CRE will continue through both the exploration and discipleship phases.**
 - **Meet at least once every three months**
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EDUCATION

- **An approved education program shall be completed by those who wish to be CREs in the Presbytery of Florida.**
 - **CPM recommends the two-year program of Union Presbyterian Seminary (UPSem), Pathways to Learning and Leadership.**
 - **Persons may become explorers before they begin their studies at UPSem or at any point during those studies; but a minimum of two years are required for the explorer and disciple phases – at least one year as an explorer and at least six months as a disciple -- before the person may be commissioned as a CRE.**
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EXPLORER

- **The purpose of the exploration phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe they may be called to serve as CREs to explore that call together so that both the presbytery and the explorer can make an informed decision about the explorer's suitability for ministry as a CRE. Enrollment of the applicant as an explorer does not guarantee that the explorer will be recommended for enrollment as a disciple.**
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EXPLORER

- **To be enrolled as an explorer the applicants must:**
 - **be a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and have been active in the work and worship of a congregation of the Presbytery of Florida for at least six months;**
 - **Submit an application form;**
 - **Receive the endorsement of the session of their congregation. Sessions shall meet in person with ruling elders interested in becoming CREs before endorsing them. Sessions shall also meet with explorers and disciples at least once every six months to review their progress toward becoming CREs;**
 - **Submit two letters of recommendation;**
 - **Engage in an interview with the CPM;**
 - **Have a high school diploma or GED.**
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EXPLORER

- **During this phase, explorers must complete the following tasks and report on them to their mentors:**
 - **undergo a psychological and vocational assessment within the first two months after becoming an explorer which is paid for 1/3 by CPM, 1/3 by the prospective CRE, and 1/3 by the local congregation;**
 - **complete the Foundations (Year 1) courses at UPSem;**
 - **preach once in a church assigned by the CPM;**
 - **observe a regular session meeting in a church assigned by the CPM;**
 - **observe worship in a variety of liturgical seasons outside their church of membership assigned by the CPM.**
Explorers must maintain regular contact with their mentors and attend bi-annual meetings with the CPM.
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DISCIPLE

- **The purpose of the discipleship phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve as CREs. This shall be accomplished through the presbytery's support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry as a CRE. Enrollment of an explorer as a disciple does not guarantee that the disciple will be recommended for commissioning as a CRE even if the candidate completes the program of education for CREs at UPSem.**
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DISCIPLE

- **To be enrolled as a disciple the applicant must**
 - **have completed at least one year as an explorer, and submitted a report on their progress toward becoming a CRE during that time;**
 - **have completed the activities required in the explorer phase;**
 - **receive the concurrence of their mentor that this move to the discipleship phase is advisable;**
 - **submit an application form;**
 - **engage in an interview with the CPM.**
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DISCIPLE

- **During this phase the disciple must complete the following tasks and report on them to their mentors:**
 - **complete the required coursework (Year 2) for CREs at UPSem.**
 - **preach and lead worship twice (two different sermons in two different churches) in churches assigned by the CPM.**
 - **teach twice with arrangements approved by the mentor.**
 - **interview one CRE and one Minister of Word and Sacrament (in churches of average worship attendance of fewer than 70 members) assigned by the CPM, using questions supplied in part by the CPM.**
 - **observe two regular session meetings in churches assigned by the CPM.**
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DISCIPLE

- **Disciples shall maintain regular contact with their mentors and attend bi-annual meetings with the CPM.**
 - **Disciples may serve as supply preachers and leaders of worship with the guidance and approval of the COM but may not assume the responsibilities of a CRE until they have been commissioned.**
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FINAL ASSESSMENT

- **In order to be approved as an Authorized Ruling Elder disciples must:**
 - **complete at least 6 months as a disciple;**
 - **complete the activities required in the disciple phase;**
 - **complete the CRE program at UPSem;**
 - **receive the concurrence of their mentor that they seem to be called to be CREs;**
 - **complete a CRE Personal Information Report (CREPIR);**
 - **submit a written faith statement;**
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FINAL ASSESSMENT

- **In order to be approved as an Authorized Ruling Elder disciples must:**
 - **submit an autobiographical account of their faith journey and the development of their vocational calling;**
 - **submit a written sermon, with a description of the contemporary need to which the sermon is addressed and an exegetical interpretation of the Biblical material for the sermon;**
 - **give evidence of an understanding of the questions required for ordination;**
 - **be examined by Presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, theology, Bible, and polity. Parts, but not all, of this examination, may be conducted on behalf of Presbytery by the CPM.**
 - **A background check shall be conducted before a person is commissioned by the Committee on Ministry to serve as a CRE in a church.**
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MORE INFO

- For more information, please contact the Presbytery office (850-535-2335; office@presbyteryofflorida.com) or CPM Chair, Rev. Raymond Guterman (dwguterman@gmail.com).

