

**LAY PASTOR –TERMS OF COMMISSION POLICY**  
**PRESBYTERY OF LAKE ERIE**  
**APRIL 19, 2005**

**Commissioned Lay Pastor Defined**

- A The Book of Order defines that a 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 of the presbytery designated by the presbytery. Such an elder is selected by and receives training approved by the presbytery. The elder shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. The elder shall be examined by the appropriate committee of presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction mentioned previously. An elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in a particular congregation may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions of a commissioned lay pastor again until appointed to a particular congregation by the presbytery. G-14.0801a
- B A successful lay pastor program helps the presbytery achieve its goal of ensuring worship leadership and services of ministry to churches where ministers of the word and sacrament may not be feasible or available due to financial constraint. Normally, lay pastors will only be commissioned to serve churches having fewer than one hundred active members, and where their usage appears to be the best way to assure continuity of leadership.

**Selection and Process**

- A The committee on preparation for ministry shall be responsible for recruiting, examining, selecting, training and supervising lay pastors. Applicants shall be ordained elders with a written letter of recommendation from the session of the congregation of which they are an active member.
- B The committee on ministry will examine each applicant and be firmly convinced that the person is potentially competent to be a lay pastor willing to undergo training, and is amenable to the ongoing supervision of the committee.
- C With the approval of the committee to begin training, each applicant shall be trained in the areas directed by the Book of Order
- D Upon the completion of all training as directed, the applicant will be examined by the committee as to personal faith, motives for seeking a commission, and the areas of instruction.
- E When the committee is satisfied of a successful examination, it shall inform the applicant in writing and place the candidate on the Pulpit Supply list of the presbytery.
- F When a certified applicant receives an invitation to serve a particular congregation, the committee shall review the applicant's suitability for that

position as well as the terms of commission before making recommendation to the presbytery.

## **Training**

- A The elder shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching.
- B The Committee on Ministry may deem that additional instruction is necessary in order to recommend approval to presbytery for the performance of functions.
- C Presbytery shall regularly provide resources for the person's spiritual and intellectual development.
- D Through the annual budgeting process of the presbytery, the committee on ministry shall receive and allocate funds so that there are adequate resources for the required training of applicants. Applicants shall pay the cost of books and materials, while the committee will compensate training leaders as needed.

## **Functions**

- A Basic Functions**
  - 1 Lead worship and preach the gospel for the congregation to which the commission is granted at services approved by the session
  - 2 Watch over and provide for parishioners' nurture and service through pastoral care including hospital visitation, home visitations including illness & bereavement, new & potential member visitations, as well as lead Bible studies and teach in the program of Christian Education at the church commissioned.
  - 3 In the exercise of pastoral care, commissioned lay pastors shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing such care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a commissioned lay pastor may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A commissioned lay pastor may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person.
  - 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 Conduct funeral services for active, inactive and baptized members of the congregation to which the commission is granted
  - 7 Engage in community ministries including ecumenical community events as directed and approved by the session
  - 8 Unless approved by the Presbytery to provide counseling to parishioners, a lay pastor shall refer parishioners to a certified counselor or minister of the word & sacrament.
  - 9 Meet at least quarterly with the mentor and report annually with the committee on ministry or its representatives.
  - 10 Engage in a planned program of continuing education in those areas identified by the committee on ministry as important throughout the course of the commission.
- B Additional Functions**
  - 1 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: Administer the Lord's Supper, Administer the Sacrament of Baptism, Moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of and when invited by the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery (if approved, the Commissioned Lay Pastor may also lead services of ordination and installation of elders and deacons), perform a service of Christian marriage for active, inactive and baptized members of the congregation to which the commission is granted when allowed by the state.

- 2 The presbytery, when it deems it to be in the best interest of the presbytery and the church involved, and when it deems that the lay pastor commissioned to that church is sufficiently trained in and loyal to Presbyterian polity, may appoint a lay pastor as moderator of session to the church to which she or he is commissioned. The person assigned to the commissioned lay pastor as mentor and supervisor shall also supervise his or her work as moderator.
- 3 All requests for the performance of additional functions must be made on the Terms of Commission form and include any documentation or certification to show training has taken place before the committee may make recommendations to the presbytery for approval.

### **Compensation**

- A By January of each year all churches utilizing commissioned lay pastors shall submit to the committee on ministry a Terms of Commission worksheet detailing financial compensation and requests for the performance of additional functions. The following recommendations concerning minimums are not meant to preclude negotiation for compensation with the session of the church being served.
- B Minimum financial compensation shall be based on 75% of the presbytery's minimum terms of call approved annually for ministers of the word and sacrament. Minimum compensation shall be prorated for the based on the percent of full time for which the commission is approved (eg: ¼ time would receive ¼ of 75% of the presbytery's approved minimum terms of call).
- C Funds for continuing education shall be included in the terms of commission.
- D Pension and medical benefits are both optional.
- E Mileage shall be reimbursed at the current IRS rate

### **Supervision**

- A The commissioned lay pastor shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served and/or through the committee on ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor. Selected ministers on the committee on ministry or other ministers selected by the committee may act as mentor for a group of lay pastors not to exceed four in number at one time. The mentor assigned will act as liaison to the committee on ministry and will be prepared to give an overview of the lay pastors under their care.
- B A review of the work of the commissioned lay pastor shall be conducted annually by the committee on ministry. No recommendations for renewal to a commission shall be made without an annual review having taken place and without the Terms of Commission having been reviewed by the committee.

### **Period Valid**

- A The commission shall be valid for a period of one year. It may be renewed at expiration at the discretion of the presbytery.

- B Recommendations for renewals to commissions shall be presented to the Presbytery at the stated meeting in February of each year.

**Termination of Commission**

- A A commission may be terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery.
- B A Lay Pastor or session may make a request to the Committee on Ministry for the recommendation to the Presbytery that a commission be terminated at any time. The Committee on Ministry will council the lay pastor and session prior to making recommendation to the presbytery for the termination of a commission.
- C Presbytery shall revoke the commission of any lay pastor who does not abide by the provisions of this policy or whose work is evaluated as not adequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation of the presbytery.
- D An elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in a particular congregation may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions of a commissioned lay pastor again until appointed to a particular congregation by the presbytery.