

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” - Luke 10:2

The Commission Lay Pastor

The Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) 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. (Book of Order G.14.0560)

This is a very exciting and challenging time for our Presbytery. Lay Pastors are already filling critical needs in a number of our churches and within the Presbytery structure. No doubt the future will see an increased role for the Lay Pastor. With this in mind, our Presbytery endeavors to equip talented and committed Lay Pastors to the work of the Gospel.

In our Presbytery the identification and training of candidates is the responsibility of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), while the ongoing support and supervision of those commissioned as Lay Pastors is the responsibility of the Committee On Ministry (COM). The Lay Pastor Coordinator works with both of these bodies, and provides continuity through the process.

The advent of the office of Commissioned Lay Pastor in our denomination and Presbytery is truly an expression of the motto, “The Church Reformed, Always Reforming.” Conceived not as a replacement for the traditional education and training of ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the Lay Pastor Program in the Presbytery of Northern New York is rather a creative effort to identify, nurture and utilize the gifts of women and men within our own churches that together we might better serve the body of Christ and the children of God.

Getting Started

The Lay Pastor Program in the Presbytery of Northern New York is open to all ordained Elders in good standing in the Presbyterian Church (USA); though you need not necessarily be currently serving on the Session of your home church.

The First Step

If you are sensing within yourself a call to ministry as a Lay Pastor, or you simply have questions about the program, the first step would be to contact the Lay Pastor Coordinator, Rev. Michael Catanzaro. The coordinator will review the requirements, explain the program, answer your questions and assist you in beginning the discernment process when you are prepared to do so.

Application And Session Endorsement

The next step in the process is to complete an application to the program (available on the Presbytery’s website); then, meet with the Session of your home church for their endorsement of your application and pursuit.

Enrollment In The Program

The completed application, letter of endorsement from your Session, three references and a short narrative speaking to your desire to enroll in the Lay Pastor Program should then be sent to the Lay Pastor Coordinator. Once this information is received, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) and Lay Pastor Coordinator will arrange a meeting to get to know you, review the program with you and explore your sense of call to ministry. With approval of your application and enrollment in the program, you may now begin to work toward meeting the educational requirements.

Educational Requirements

Though Lay Pastor Programs vary from Presbytery to Presbytery, the basic requirements for every Lay Pastor is articulated in section G-14.05 (ff) of the Book of Order; Part II of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Course Work

- Introduction to Old Testament (Core Course)
- Introduction to New Testament (Core Course)
- Reformed Theology (Core Course)
- Preaching (Core Course)
- Worship and Sacraments (Core Course)
- Presbyterian Polity
- Pastoral Care
- Teaching

The options for meeting these requirements are flexible. For example taking a course offered within the Presbytery, a course offered with/by ecumenical partners, a tutorial course, a course at an accredited seminary, a course at a college or university (that is shown to cover the appropriate material), an on-line course offered by a reformed seminary or university. Prior approval of any course work must be obtained from the Lay Pastor Coordinator with the final approval of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Practicums

In addition to the required eight courses, the Lay Pastor Coordinator and other minister members of the Presbytery will offer hands on practicums in the administration of the sacraments, funerals and services of marriage.

Scholarship aid is available for study and continuing education.

“They appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.” - Acts 14:23

Completing The Process

Certified Lay Pastor

Upon completion of the full curriculum and upon the recommendation of the Lay Pastor Coordinator, a candidate will be examined by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry for recommendation as a certified Lay Pastor. This examination shall include:

- Presentation of a personal statement of faith
- Presentation of a sermon (preferably orally) along with exegetical notes on the biblical passage(s) upon which the sermon is based.
- A self-evaluation
- Examinations in the following areas (oral and/or written) modeled after the practically oriented questions in the standard ordination examinations: theology, worship and sacraments, pastoral care, teaching.

Upon successful completion of the examination, the candidate is presented to Presbytery for certification for a commission.

Commissioned Lay Pastor

Certified Lay Pastors are commissioned by the Presbytery upon the recommendation and approval of the Committee on Ministry to one of the following areas:

- A specific congregation(s) (as solo pastor or associate)
- A specific group or cluster of cooperating congregations
- A new church development
- A validated ministry of presbytery

Upon completion of Biblical courses, at least two other core courses, the recommendation of the Lay Pastor Coordinator & approval of COM, a candidate may serve as a supply preacher in the Presbytery.

Commissioned Lay Pastors

Commissioned Lay Pastors are ordained Elders in the PC (U.S.A.) who have felt the call to ministry, possess the necessary gifts and skills to meet the challenges of ministry, undertaken a process of reflection, examination & study to prepare for ministry, and have been commissioned by the Presbytery to serve as pastors in our member churches.

Contact Information

Lay Pastor Coordinator

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Becoming A
Lay Pastor
In The Presbytery of
Northern New York

