

# **PRESBYTERY OF TAMPA BAY**

## **Commissioned Lay Pastor Program**

### **I. OVERVIEW**

#### **A. Definition**

A Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP), is an elder (or elder equivalent\*) called by God and affirmed by her/his session (or session equivalent\*\*).

*\*The term “elder equivalent” is described in the Book of Order for use in immigrant fellowships. The chosen lay leadership of such a fellowship may be recognized as equivalent to elders in accordance with (Book of Order G-9.0503 (2)(a)). Such leaders may be commissioned as lay pastors.*

*\*\*In immigrant fellowships the equivalent of the Session may be a Commission appointed by the Presbytery of Tampa Bay or may be a body found to be equivalent by the Evangelism and Church Development Committee.*

A Commissioned Lay Pastor is trained, commissioned, and nurtured by the presbytery to be a pastor to a particular congregation or ministry. S/he may serve full, or part-time, with or without pay. The commission is authoritative only within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay, only in the church or ministry specified, and only for the time specified. The commission may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time either at the discretion of Presbytery or at the request of the CLP.

#### **B. Requirements**

The Book of Order (G-14.0560) establishes the criteria for the equipping of lay pastors and for their ongoing accountability to a presbytery. The Commissioned Lay Pastor is an elder (or elder equivalent) who leads worship and preaches the gospel, watches over the people, and provides for their nurture and service. This commission is valid only in one or more congregations, a new church development, an immigrant fellowship, or other validated ministry of the presbytery, designated by the presbytery, for a specified period of time. An elder equivalent must receive the same training as that outlined in the Book of Order for elders. (G-14.0240)

#### **C. Who is called?**

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” (Romans 12:6a). Within every congregation God bestows many and diverse gifts upon the members of that church. It is important that churches actively encourage laypersons to honor, use, and build upon their gifts in the ministry of the church. The Presbytery of Tampa Bay seeks to identify and encourage men and women gifted for ministry as Commissioned Lay Pastors.

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#### **D. Opportunity for anyone who wants to grow in faith**

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay will establish a training program to prepare candidates for ministry as CLPs (see Appendix F). The CLP course of study will be open to anyone who wants to grow in faith, but is particularly designed for those seeking to become Commissioned Lay Pastors. We seek to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” as outlined in Ephesians 4:12. Classes are designed not only to meet the educational needs of the program, but also to take into account different learning styles, using a practical process that will include study, application and reflection and will help students discover their unique spiritual, psychological and leadership gifts.

#### **E. No guaranteed employment**

Completion of the program does not guarantee placement of any kind nor does it guarantee the right to exercise all of the functions possible for a Commissioned Lay Pastor (G-14.0562). For those who are seeking to serve as a CLP, the Presbytery of Tampa Bay through its COM will work person-to-person and church-to-church to identify optimal placements.

## **II. PROCEDURES**

### **A. Program Responsibility**

1. The Commissioned Lay Pastor program of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay shall be administered by the Commissioned Lay Pastor Oversight Team (hereafter called CLPOT “claypot”).
  2. Members of the CLPOT are to be nominated by the Presbytery Nominating Committee and elected by the Presbytery.
  3. The CLPOT will consist of nine members, to serve in three equal classes. Insofar as possible overall team membership shall include experience with the responsibilities and procedures of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, the Committee on Ministry, the Committee on Education and the Evangelism and Church Development Committee, with attention to gender and racial/ethnic representation.
  4. The CLPOT will have the following responsibilities:
    - i. recruitment, admission, or dismissal for cause of candidates to the program
    - ii. oversight of the training process
    - iii. consultation with CLP candidates as they explore their sense of call
    - iv. interpretation of the CLP program for churches
    - v. referral of the candidate to Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry for examination, approval of placement, and post-commissioning oversight (see G-14.0560 and G-14.0564) once a CLP candidate is ready for a commission.
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## **B. Application Process for Elders**

1. An applicant to the program shall either be an elder or an elder equivalent in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Ordinarily, an applicant to the program shall have been a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for at least two years and active in the life of a particular church within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay for at least one year immediately prior to applying for the Commissioned Lay Pastor program. In the case of immigrant communities with roots in the Reformed tradition, membership in the fellowship may be considered to be equivalent to membership in a particular church within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay. Membership within a Reformed body may be considered to be equivalent to membership in the PCUSA.
3. Application to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor will be filed with the CLPOT and will include a completed application form, the completed support form from the church Session or its equivalent in the case of immigrant fellowships, and an interview with the CLPOT (see Appendices A and B.)
4. Each CLP candidate is ordinarily required to participate in the same psychological and vocational testing arranged by the CPM of the presbytery and the endorsing congregation. Entrance to the CLP program is contingent upon this report being deemed satisfactory by the CLPOT, or the candidate being exempted from that process by the CLPOT.
5. Applicants for whom English is not a primary language may apply to take courses in their primary languages with the prior approval of the Commissioned Lay Pastor Oversight Teams
6. Applicants who have previous study in required areas may submit those to CLPOT for consideration.
7. Application packets are available through the presbytery office.
8. Applicants to the program should be aware that acceptance to this program does not guarantee placement as a Commissioned Lay Pastor in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.

## **C. Application Process for Churches and Presbytery**

1. Churches interested in ministry with a Commissioned Lay Pastor should consult the Committee on Ministry or, in the case of immigrant or new church development, the Evangelism and Church Development Committee to assess whether the CLP program would be the most appropriate strategy for the church's ministry.
  2. If approved by the appropriate committee (COM or ECD) to pursue a Lay Pastor Commission, a church may interview CLP candidates or propose an elder (or elder equivalent) for preparation through the CLP program. A proposed elder (or elder equivalent) would file an application with the CLPOT and if accepted would enter the regular process.
  3. If the Presbytery, through one of its committees or through Presbytery staff, discovers a person who would be a good candidate for CLP training, they should encourage that person to pray about CLP ministry, seeking discernment on the matter, and apply if so led.
  4. If the Presbytery, through one of its committees, envisions a ministry that would be best led by a CLP, the committee should bring the matter before the COM or
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the ECD as above and proceed as would a church in similar circumstance.

### **III. BECOMING A LAY PASTOR**

#### **A. Step One – Applying**

1. A Commissioned Lay Pastor is an elder or elder equivalent who, responding to God's call, carries out certain pastoral duties when commissioned by presbytery for a specific place and time within that presbytery (G-14.0560).
2. The process may begin when an elder, sensing such a call, contacts his or her session or the equivalent body in the case of immigrant fellowships, to seek validation of the call.
3. The process may also begin when a immigrant fellowship identifies a leader or leaders in accordance with the Book of Order (G-9.0503(a)(2)(a-b)).
4. The proposed Commissioned Lay Pastor and the leadership body together will initiate contact with the CLP program. (Appendices A and B) The Session or Session equivalent will appoint one or more of its members as spiritual encourager/contact person for the duration of the CLP process.
5. Before beginning a formal process of study, the Applicant shall meet with the presbytery's CLP Oversight Team (CLPOT) to discuss motivation for ministry and the particulars of the process. If CLPOT approves admission, the Applicant begins the second step.
6. A CLP liaison will be appointed by CLPOT to counsel and guide each CLP candidate through the process.
7. The CLPOT Liaison relationship includes:
  - i. designing the learning plan for the CLP candidate.
  - ii. validating directed studies done in concurrence with other agencies (presbyteries, colleges, seminaries, workshops, etc.)
  - iii. meeting with the candidate on a regularly scheduled basis.

#### **B. Step Two – Training**

*Please Note: It should be understood that CLP training will not require the same depth and breadth of professional competency as that of Minister of Word and Sacrament. This CLP program is a creative response to the particular needs of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.*

1. Training Overview: The program of preparation offered CLP candidates will have a uniform level of competencies for all participants. Realistic timelines for completion of the requirements will vary depending on the availability of qualified instructors, class size and the schedule of the candidate. Some additional work may be required depending on the type of ministry a CLP candidate is preparing to undertake. Although the formal phase of preparation will end at commissioning, education for ministry is a lifelong process.
  2. Although there seem to be no universally accepted standards within the PCUSA, successful CLP training programs generally require 80-120 hours of learning activities, plus required assignments. [See appendix E]
  3. Areas of Training (G-14.0560)
    - i. Bible
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- ii. Reformed Theology and Sacraments
  - iii. Presbyterian Polity
  - iv. Preaching
  - v. Leading Worship
  - vi. Pastoral Care
  - vii. Teaching
4. Training is required by the Presbytery of Tampa Bay in addition to the course of study required from the Book of Order. This additional training and/or class work may be offered by Tampa Bay or taken through other organizations approved by CLPOT. This requirement includes work in the following areas:
    - a. Mission Interpretation and Implementation
    - b. Family Systems Theory in the Friedman/Bowen/Steinke model
    - c. Leadership training
    - d. Church administration
    - e. Biblical Interpretation
  5. Upon entry into the CLP training phase, the CLP candidate and the CLPOT liaison will design a Learning Covenant which will be written and signed as a covenant between the candidate, his or her CLPOT Liaison and the CLPOT (Appendix C)
  6. The Learning Covenant may include a combination of self-study, directed study and classes sponsored by presbytery, or by other approved sources (on-site and/or on-line).
  7. *Special Circumstances - Ordinarily Certified Christian Educators applying to be a CLP are deemed qualified to serve having completed requirements of the book of order. G-14.0721*
  8. Final Assessment
    - i. When the CLP candidate has successfully completed the Learning Covenant, the CLPOT will conduct a final assessment. This assessment will include a review of all Learning Covenant requirements, assessment and review of problems/challenges encountered along the way, review of the CLP candidate's Faith Statement (Appendix F), and a final sermon review including exegesis, preparation, and delivery – perhaps in a congregational or alternate setting.
    - ii. Following the final assessment, CLPOT will certify the CLP candidate as having completed training for service as a CLP pastor. **NOTE:** attendance at an approved workshop on sexual misconduct is required prior to being approved for a commission.

### **C. Step Three – Commissioned Lay Pastor Placement**

*At this phase, the Commissioned Lay Pastor is formally commissioned by the presbytery to a specific ministry. The Presbytery Committee on Ministry has oversight of Step Three.*

1. Examination and Readiness – When a specific call is determined the CLP candidate and commissioning church will be examined by COM for approval (Appendix G). Prior to examination a criminal background check will be conducted. The candidate will sign and submit to COM a statement declaring the
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absence of any convictions of sexual or financial misconduct. Pending satisfactory outcomes, the COM may recommend that the candidate be commissioned to the particular church or churches within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.

2. Contract – The following shall be included in the recommendation for a commission:
  - i. The terms of the contract shall be negotiated by the Commissioned Lay Pastor Candidate and the session of the church or equivalent body (Appendices H and I). The contract must be approved by the COM.
  - ii. The contract shall name the candidate, the church, the ministry to be provided, and whether the CLP will be authorized to:
    - a. administer the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
    - b. administer the Sacrament of Baptism
    - c. moderate the session under the supervision of, and when invited by, the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery
    - d. have voice and vote in meetings of presbytery (to be counted as an elder commissioner for the purposes of parity)
    - e. perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session, and when in accordance with Florida law
  - iii. The final contract shall state the duration of the commission. Ordinarily CLP relationships in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay begin with a one-year term, which may be lengthened if and when renewed. According to Book of Order G- 14.0561 the maximum (but renewable) term is three years.
  - iv. Once approved by Presbytery (see section 3 below), the contract shall be signed by the chair of COM, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay, the clerk of the Session (or the equivalent body), and the Commissioned Lay Pastor candidate.
3. Presbytery Approval – COM shall present the Commissioned Lay Pastor Candidate and representatives of the commissioning church (or immigrant fellowship) to the Presbytery of Tampa Bay for final approval. The candidate shall give a summary of her/his faith journey and her/his statement of faith. The Commissioning church will present a statement of their rationale, vision and expectations for the ministry.
4. Service of Recognition – Following Presbytery’s approval, COM shall work with the Commissioned Lay Pastor and the Session (or equivalent body) to develop an appropriate Service of Recognition (for a sample see Appendix J).

#### **D. Step Four – Oversight during the Commission**

1. Oversight – COM shall oversee the Commissioned Lay Pastor in accordance with the Book of Order. (The oversight of immigrant fellowships continues to reside with the Evangelism and Church Development Committee.)
  2. Mentor – A mentor shall be assigned by COM. The mentor shall be a Minister of the Word and Sacrament member of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay (G- 14.0564).
    - i. The Mentor and Commissioned Lay Pastor shall meet at least quarterly to review the work of the Commissioned Lay Pastor.
    - ii. The mentor shall provide counsel, coaching and encouragement, and identify opportunities for growth in spiritual development, church leadership and
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worship.

- iii. The mentor shall provide a quarterly written summary of the CLP's progress to the COM, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement, noting whether there are areas of concern.
3. Once commissioned, a lay pastor is required to have eight contact hours of continuing education annually. These courses should be Presbyterian conferences, workshops, etc., or otherwise be approved by the Mentor. Additional approval for plans for continuing education may also be required for CLP's.
4. Annual Review – Annually, the Commissioned Lay Pastor should undergo a review from the church s/he serves. At the same time the overall CLP relationship will be reviewed by the COM. The review is intended to be part of a reciprocal dialogue wherein the Commissioned Lay Pastor and Session seek ways in which each can better serve the church of Jesus Christ. Sample Commissioned Lay Pastor Review formats are found in Appendix K-1, K-2 and K-3.

#### **E. Step Five – Terminating the Local Commission**

1. The local commission between a congregation and a Commissioned Lay Pastor may be dissolved at the end of the Commission term, or with 30 days notice by mutual agreement between Session, Lay Pastor and the COM.
2. The local commission may be dissolved after a consultation including COM, the Session, the Mentor, and the Commissioned Lay Pastor.
3. The COM shall revoke the commission of any Commissioned Lay Pastor who does not abide by the provisions specified in G-14.0561 of the Book of Order and the provisions contained in this policy.

### **IV. EXPECTATIONS**

#### **F. The Commissioned Lay Pastor**

1. Will lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service in the church, congregation or ministry commissioned to his or her care.
  2. May perform other duties as negotiated with the session(s) and with the concurrence of COM and as noted in the contract.
  3. Should attend all session meetings of the commission church.
  4. Shall pursue a program of continuing education each year.
  5. Shall have CLP work reviewed annually by the presbytery through COM in consultation with the session of the local commission or appropriate local board (Appendix K-1 to K-3).
  6. Shall ordinarily be enrolled as an elder, elder equivalent or certified educator, serving as a CLP with voice and vote in meetings of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay for the term of the commission and shall participate responsibly in the deliberations and work of the presbytery.
  7. Will ordinarily remain a member of the particular church where membership was previously held.
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8. Will work with a Mentor who is ordinarily the Moderator of the Session of the church, but may be supervised by another Minister of the Word and Sacrament assigned by COM (G-14.0562).

**G. The Mentor**

1. The Mentor of the Commissioned Lay Pastor shall be a Minister of Word and Sacrament.
2. The Mentor, the Commissioned Lay Pastor, and representatives of the Session or equivalent body shall participate in an annual review process.
3. The Mentor will meet at least quarterly with the CLP and will review continuing education plans of the CLP.

**H. The Presbytery**

4. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery shall annually present to presbytery the names of Commissioned Lay Pastors serving in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay as well as names of those who have completed CLP training and are available to serve.

