

PRESBYTERY OF ARKANSAS COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR INSTRUCTIONS

A Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) is a full-time or part-time, salaried or volunteer person, called by God, trained and commissioned “*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.*” The process of commissioning a CLP is governed by the Book of Order (G-14.0560) and administered by the presbytery.

The application process to become a CLP in the Presbytery of Arkansas involves the following steps:

APPLICATION PHASE

1. Complete the CLP application, answer the essay questions, and enclose the application fee of \$25.00 and return to the presbytery office.
2. Have your local Presbyterian Church complete the endorsement form. Ordinarily, you shall be an elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be commissioned.
3. Have two people who know you well and have first-hand knowledge of your service to the Church complete a personal reference form.
4. Read the Book of Order section G-14.0560 which outlines the rules regarding CLPs.
5. An interview will be scheduled prior to the second seminar for you to meet with members of the Sub-Committee on CLP/Lay Academy before acceptance in the program is complete.
(Note: If you want to be trained in order to become available to the Committee on Ministry (COM) as a possible CLP candidate, complete the entire form as part of your application;
if you are exploring the possibility of such a ministry, but not immediately, the application form will need to be completed before you can be considered a candidate by the COM. It is recommended that you complete the entire form;
if you are an applicant, whether an elder or not, desirous of deepening your understanding of the Christian Faith and its practice within the Church, past and present, complete only page 3 of the Application.”

TRAINING PHASE

6. The training program will involve four weekend training events per year (Friday evening through early Sunday afternoon) for two and one-half years. Cost of each training event is \$50.00 plus the cost of books. Most, but not all meals, will be included in the cost for the class. Weekends will be held as nearly central to the student body as possible, several other factors being part of setting the location. Events may require overnight lodging. Lodging will be made available for students, if desired. Other students may choose other lodging options. Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from each event. Your local

Presbyterian church will be asked, but not required, to help with the cost of each event. Students in the program must attend eight out of the ten training events to graduate the program. Participation in the group process is critical. A mentor will be appointed to work with students through the two-year training process.

7. The Sub-Committee on CLP/Lay Academy will certify that a particular student has successfully completed the CLP training program, but the Committee on Ministry will conduct the final oral examination and certify the student able to look for a place of service in the presbytery. A background check and a psychological evaluation are ordinarily a part of the process.

COMMISSIONING PHASE

8. Finding a suitable place for ministry as a CLP is a process involving the student in conjunction with the Committee on Ministry.
9. Commissioning services will be held at a meeting of presbytery and a service of recognition and installation may also be held in the congregation of service.
10. The presbytery will appoint a Minister member of the presbytery to serve as mentor throughout your service as CLP. This mentor may or may not be the same mentor for the educational process.
11. All CLPs will be required to attend an annual continuing education event after commissioning.

COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR APPLICATION FORM

Full Legal Name _____ Nickname _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (Home) _____ (Work) _____

E-mail address _____

Cellular Phone _____

Social Security Number _____

Church Membership at _____

Church Address _____

Year you joined this church _____

Year you were ordained an elder _____

Length of time you have been Presbyterian _____

Length of time you have spent in other denominations _____ Which ones? _____

Educational Background

School and location

Year graduated

Degree

Major/Minor

Present Employment (position title, description of your work)

I apply for admission to the Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program in the Presbytery of Arkansas. If accepted, I commit myself to participate fully in the training program to the best of my ability. I understand that successful completion of the program is a requirement for, but not a guarantee of, future commissioning as a Commissioned Lay Pastor. By signing this I acknowledge that I agree to the terms found in the Presbytery of Arkansas' "Life Together in the Community of Faith: Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" **AND** "The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" **AND** the "Sexual Misconduct Policy."

Date _____ Signature _____

ESSAY QUESTIONS (Must be completed as part of the CLP application process)

Please write a paragraph or two answering the following questions. Please type your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why do you want to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor and how have you experienced your sense of God's call to this ministry?
2. How have you served the local church, presbytery, synod and General Assembly in the past?
3. Describe your current spiritual practices and disciplines.
4. What aspects of work in the church do you find the most meaningful and rewarding?
5. What aspects of work in the church do you find the least interesting?
6. Are there particular difficulties or handicaps that will make your training and service as a CLP more difficult? How do you plan on dealing with these difficulties?
7. What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?
8. What particular aspects about yourself do you want the Sub-Committee on CLP/Lay Academy to know that the Sub-Committee might not ask?

LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR
MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

As a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, I accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of the church, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore I will:

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my life's work and church membership, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech: and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct myself within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that nothing need be hidden from sisters and brothers in Christ Therefore I will:

1. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage. Speaking the truth in love.
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise my witness and relationships within the community of faith;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit to others where due and observe copyrights;
9. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me: and
10. Accept the discipline of the church.

III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal.
Therefore I will:

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for sisters and brothers in Christ;
3. Recruit church members responsibly. respect existing congregational relationships and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations: and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES AND
VOLUNTEERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

As an employee or volunteer in an entity, governing body, or congregation associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that will support the ministry of my workplace. Therefore I will:

1. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
2. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern;
3. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my position, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
4. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs; and
5. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech.

II

I will conduct myself at my workplace in a manner that will support its ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Honor relationships within the workplace and observe appropriate boundaries;
2. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my position;
3. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my work;
4. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the workplace for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
5. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
6. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training. and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
7. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in papers, music. and presentations, and observe copyrights;
8. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria;
9. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and, upon leaving a position. speak and act in ways that support the work of my successor;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Accept the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable
12. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
13. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues; and
14. Cooperate with persons of other faith traditions.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The people of God live out their faith in the midst of a particular historic reality. Inherent in every time is promise and possibility, opportunities for the ministry and mission of the Church of Jesus Christ to be carried forth. The last quarter of the twentieth century has demanded that the Presbytery deal with issues related to human sexuality. While we affirm that God created humankind as male and female to live together in ways which proclaim the worth and dignity of each individual, human sexuality regrettably has often become a basis for oppression, degradation, violation, and injustice - a manifestation of sin. Those doing the work of the Presbytery bear particular responsibility in these matters.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Employee is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the Presbytery for salary or wages.
- B. Child Sexual Abuse includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior between a child and adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. For purposes of this policy, the age of adulthood is 18 years as defined by the laws of the State of Arkansas.
- C. Sexual Harassment defined as follows: unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
 - 1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution; or
 - 2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used in the basis for decisions affecting such individual; or
 - 3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interfering with an individual's performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment based on the judgment of the affected individual, previously declared to the offending party.

- D. Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:
1. Child sexual abuse as defined below; and
 2. Sexual harassment as defined in this policy and
 3. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation; and
 4. Sexual malfeasance as defined for this policy as follows: the breach of trust expressed in deliberate physical contact with the breast, buttock, or genital area within a ministerial employment, leadership, counseling, or professional relationship; and
 5. Abuse of the pastoral care or counseling relationship: The pastoral care or counseling relationships require special treatment because they may address material of a sexual nature but only within clear boundaries which avoid personal involvement. It is abuse of the relationship for the pastor or counselor to permit sexual discussions to move from the clinical into the interpersonal realm. It is never acceptable for the pastoral care or counseling relationship to include sexual contact or relationship. This applies to all ministerial relationships in which pastoral care or counseling occurs. Any consensual sexual relationship between a minister or counselor and a parishioner, client, student, or employee is presumed to be abuse and the minister or counselor carries the burden of proof to the contrary. The control and dependency relationships of counseling and pastoral care are considered, for the purposes of this policy, to extend for two years beyond the termination of actual counseling or pastoral care and the requirements in this paragraph apply to that period as well.
- E. Victim or Survivor is the term used to identify the person injured by sexual misconduct defined above.
- F. Volunteer is the term used for those who provide services for the Presbytery and receive no benefits or remuneration. Volunteers include persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, committees, and other groups. For purposes of this policy, volunteers are treated the same as employees.

POLICY STATEMENT

Sexual misconduct is a violation of the principles set forth in scripture and of the ministerial, employment, leadership, counseling and professional relationship. Sexual misconduct is an abuse of the power of a presbytery position. It is never permissible. This policy applies to all minister members of the presbytery, presbytery officers, employees of the presbytery, and lay volunteers serving in any ministry or work authorized by the presbytery. Any person found in violation of this policy is subject to action under the Rules of Discipline, *Book of Order*. Through this policy, the Presbytery of Arkansas:

- A. Affirms a standard of ethical behavior consistent with scripture and secular law;
- B. Seeks to serve the peace and purity of the church;
- C. Offers a “model” policy for sessions to use; and

- D. Affirms that all persons covered by this policy are expected to comply with the applicable laws of the State of Arkansas.

CHILD ABUSE

The following policies apply to Presbytery employees and volunteers in dealing with children:

- A. Employees should at all times conduct themselves in a manner which avoids even the appearance of impropriety.
- B. Employees may not strike a child, employ corporal punishment, or intentionally cause physical injury to a child.
- C. Employees must not intentionally touch children in bodily areas that are not appropriate.
- D. Employees may not kiss children above the age of 8 years.
- E. Employees should not engage in prolonged touching of children except as necessary and appropriate to console a child.
- F. Employees may not use disciplinary procedures intended to inflict mental or emotional injury to a child.
- G. Employees must report immediately to their supervisor or the Committee on Personnel any accusations of physical, mental, or sexual abuse that come to their attention.

COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION FORM
(Individual)

A Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) is a full-time or part-time, salaried or volunteer person, called by God, trained and commissioned “*by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service*” (Book of Order G-14.0560). A CLP will be able to fulfil most of the duties of an ordained minister.

Two personal references and the recommendation of a local church session are required in order for the applicant to be received in the CLP Training Program. The applicant has listed you as a reference. Please answer the following questions honestly and return to the address listed on the back side of the recommendation form.

Reference Requested for CLP applicant _____

Name of Reference _____

Address of Reference _____

Phone _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

In what capacity do you know the applicant? _____

Do you have first-hand knowledge of the applicant’s ability to speak in public, teach, or preach?
What was your experience of the applicant’s success at these times? _____

What are the applicant’s strengths and gifts for ministry?

What are the applicant's weaknesses? _____

Other comments about the applicant: _____

Would you recommend the applicant for admission into the Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program? (Check one)

I would recommend the applicant.

I would NOT recommend the applicant.

I will neither recommend nor not recommend the applicant.

May a member of the Interviewing Committee call you about your recommendation (check one)

Yes

No

Signature of Person making recommendation _____

Date _____

Mail the completed recommendation form to:

Sub-Committee on CLP/Lay Academy

c/o Presbytery of Arkansas

9221 North Rodney Parham Road

Little Rock, AR 72227

COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION FORM
(Session)

A Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) is a full-time or part-time, salaried or volunteer person, called by God, trained and commissioned “*by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service*” (Book of Order G-14.0560). A CLP will be able to fulfil most of the duties of an ordained minister.

Two personal references and the recommendation of a local church session are required in order for the applicant to be received in the CLP Training Program. The applicant lists that he/she is a member of your congregation. As a session, please answer the following questions honestly and return to the address listed on the backside of the recommendation form.

Reference Requested for CLP applicant _____

Name of Church _____

Address _____

Phone _____

How long has the applicant been a member? _____

When was the applicant ordained an elder? _____

In what capacities has the applicant served your congregation? _____

What are the applicant’s strengths and gifts for ministry?

What are the applicant’s weaknesses? _____

Other comments about the applicant: _____

Would the Session recommend the applicant for admission into the Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program? (Check one)

We would recommend the applicant.

We would NOT recommend the applicant.

We will neither recommend nor not recommend the applicant.

The Sub-Committee on CLP/Lay Academy asks that the local church assist the applicant with the cost of the CLP Training Program by contributing 50% of the cost of the tuition for each class. Tuition is \$50/class. There are 8 classes required over a two year period. Total contribution by the Session would be \$100/year or a total contribution of \$200. Would the Session commit to helping the applicant financially?

Yes

No

Signature of Clerk of Session or Moderator _____
Date _____

Mail the completed recommendation form to:

Sub-Committee on CLP/Lay Academy
c/o Presbytery of Arkansas
9221 North Rodney Parham Road
Little Rock, AR 72227