

The Authorized Preacher/Commissioned Lay Pastor Program A Walk Through

WHAT IS THE AP/CLP PROGRAM?

In Kiski Presbytery, CLP refers to Commissioned Lay Pastors serving in one or more particular churches. AP refers to trained and qualified elders, Authorized Preachers, who are not CLPs who itinerate through our pulpits as part of the Kiski Presbytery Supply Service. To meet the demand for worship leadership, APs are assigned by the Presbytery Office to preach in churches needing a pulpit supply. Such needs include pastoral vacation/study leave, temporary disability of the pastor, churches without a pastor or those with a moderator but no pastor, and churches belonging to larger parishes/Area Ministries with a pulpit rotation.

COMMISSIONED LAY PASTORS: STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT BY COM

The Book of Order (G-14.0515) provided for training, examination and authorization of persons to exercise a public ministry of the Church as CLPs. G-14.1513d provides for a “temporary supply (who) may be ...an elder secured by the session to conduct services when there is no pastor of the pastor is unable to perform pastoral duties.” The need for CLPs being rarer than the need for APs, assignment depends upon discernment by CPM that the person has the potential gifts and skills to be an effective CLP and the completion of further training and examination. Commissioning is a strategic decision coordinated by COM seeking to maximize the benefit to the congregation.

APPROPRIATE SETTINGS FOR CLPs

- Where there is potential for viable ministry but resources are too limited to call a Minister of Word and Sacrament
- Where it is not possible to place a trained interim Minister of Word and Sacrament
- Where the services of the CLP on staff would enhance the work of a ministry team
- As a pastoral assistant to a Tentmaker Minister of Word and Sacrament
- As a chaplain at a resident care setting

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Pittsburgh Seminary and a group of presbyteries in the western portion of the Synod of the Trinity sponsor a cooperative program for the classroom based portion of the training. The Dubuque Seminary Online Training Program offers 8 core courses required by the Book of Order. Participants are also assigned a mentor and must participate fully in the mentoring process over time.

APPLICATION TO THE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Applicants must be Elders who have been active members for at least two years of the sponsoring congregation. They must be High School graduates and must be endorsed both by the pastor/moderator and the session of their church. The presbytery relies upon the local churches to identify those members with the skills and qualities which might indicate God is calling them to this form of ministry. While those applying will need to be trained in biblical studies, preaching, and worship leadership, applicants should be identified by their churches as having the potential to become capable preachers.

All application materials are available on the Kiski website or from the office. An application form must be filed by all applicants wishing to serve as APs/CLPs. Applicants are required to file Session and Pastor/Moderator Endorsement Forms and three Personal Reference Forms. Application is to be made to the Presbytery's Committee On Preparation for Ministry.

Both the Cooperative Program and the Dubuque program also have an application specific to their organizational requirements. One set of application materials is not a substitute for the other. Those applying to the cooperative program send that application to the presbytery office. The application must be endorsed by CPM before the Presbytery office forwards it to the seminary. Those enrolling in the Dubuque program apply directly online to Dubuque. We require that students in that program sign a release authorizing the presbytery to have access to their application and to their evaluations.

THE MENTORING PROCESS

Mentors provide a vital link for students in the Authorized Preacher/Commissioned Lay Pastor Training Program between the academic classroom setting and the "real life" of service in local churches. The role of the Mentor is to provide an objective "listening ear," to act as a source of information and encouragement, to provide professional and spiritual nurture, and to function as part of the training team.

Mentors are active minister members of the Presbytery of Kiskiminetas. Mentors for participants in the training program will be assigned by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Mentors for Authorized Preachers who are not continuing in CLP Training and Commissioned Lay Pastors will be assigned by the Committee on Ministry. Mentors ideally are chosen for their ability to be a good role model, accessible, collegial, approachable, and non-judgmental. Practically, the assignment of the mentor begins first with the question: Who do we have (somewhat) nearby? The next question: How many hats are they already wearing in the presbytery? The specific functions of the mentoring process are available in the online CLP manual. The reality is that while we have laid out an ideal process, time and life demands mean that mentors and students are doing pretty well if they get together at least once per quarter.

APPROVAL TO START PREACHING IN THE PRESBYTERY

After the completion of one year of coursework including one preaching course, three sermons preached and observed by the mentor, and the completion of the exam process outlined below, the student may be assigned as an Authorized Preacher by the Supply Service.

EXAMINATION TO BE AN AP

At the end of the first year, the following must be submitted to CPM:

- Faith statement
- Comprehensive reflection paper
- Exegetical paper, sermon on the exegesis and a full order of worship including all prayers and hymns
- A sermon tape or dvd

CPM's examination of the student includes:

- Reflection on the written material and tape/dvd
- Bible content exam and understanding of Reformed theology demonstrated by an ordination level exam
- Oral interview on
 - How have you grown spiritually this year
 - How has your understanding of God changed
 - How has your understanding of yourself changed
 - How have these changes influenced your daily life
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses
 - What has it meant to be part of this covenant community
- Faithfulness in fulfilling the mentor/trainee covenant

OUTCOME OF THE AUTHORIZED PREACHER EXAMINATION

- CPM may recommend to the presbytery that the Student is ready to be recognized as an Authorized Preacher.
- CPM may request the Student to resubmit any of the materials.
- CPM may recommend that a specified number of mentoring sessions take place before authorization (if other requirements have been satisfied, but mentoring has not).
- CPM may determine the Student needs more experience in preaching, and reexamine at a later date.
- CPM may recommend that the Student not be authorized as a preacher.

AUTHORIZATION GRANTED BY PRESBYTERY AT A STATED MEETING

Those who have “passed” the CPM examination, and have been signed off on by their mentor are authorized at a Stated Meeting of the Presbytery. The Presbytery Moderator leads the authorization. The new APs are given a certificate and a gift by CPM, usually a bound leather version of the Book of Common Worship. APs are then eligible to preach every Sunday they are

available and assigned. As much as possible, the Presbytery office encourages APs and churches to work through our central supply service.

THE PROCESS TO BE CERTIFIED BY CPM AS “READY TO BE COMMISSIONED AS A CLP”

First, it cannot be stressed highly enough that the gifts and skills which a CLP requires are different and more specialized than those needed by an AP. In Kiski, we might regard the normative outcome of the program as successful service as an Authorized Preacher. A few of those in the training program will have the spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral instinct qualities to continue in the CLP process. The decision that someone is a good prospective CLP must be made upon CPM’s discernment of their Call to this position, and their ability to fill it wisely. Just as in discerning whether someone should become a candidate for MWS, the decision cannot be made solely upon the desire of the person to become a CLP, or the desire of their church that they become one. Since we do not administer personality or psychological tests for CLP “candidates,” this data must be gathered through observation of the person in worship settings, consultation with their sponsoring sessions and pastors, evaluation of their course evaluations, and consultation with their mentor.

THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

After satisfactory completion of the CLP Training program, adequate fulfillment of the Mentor covenant, and at least one year's service as an AP, unless waiver is granted by a 2/3 majority of the Presbytery, the individual may seek examination for readiness to serve as a Commissioned Lay Pastor.

SERMON EVALUATION

- The individual submits an exegesis, written sermon manuscript, and full order of worship (including all prayers) in which the sermon is actually preached.
- The individual submits a sermon video tape or DVD, which has been preached at an actual service of worship. The sermon should be the one for which the exegesis, manuscript and worship materials have been submitted. This sermon tape will be viewed and evaluated by sermon examination group designated by CPM. The sermon examination group shall include both AP peers and members of CPM.
- CPM designates an evening for sermon view and feedback. CPM determines whether to advance to the written examination, or to request the individual to redo any portion of the sermon and materials, or to recommend the individual not be certified as ready for commissioning.

THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

- When the individual has satisfactorily passed the sermon evaluation portrait of the exam, the Trainee is mailed a written examination describing likely situations often encountered in ministry in the local church. The Trainee has 2 weeks from the receipt of the test to

return it. There are 3 questions on the examination. The response to each should fill 3-5 pages. The examination may be returned electronically or in print.

- CPM convenes a reading group to examine whether the student has demonstrated understanding of the theological issues involved, any pastoral concerns that may be present, constitutional considerations (Book of Order/Book of Confessions) that might impact the situation, and the Biblical basis for the response.

THE ORAL EXAMINATION

- CPM meets with the individual for an oral examination on the written responses and to interview on the following questions:
 1. What is your definition of worship?
 2. What are the parts of a Reformed Service of Worship? What is the purpose of each part?
 3. How is Scripture used in a worship service?
 4. What is the role of music in a worship service?
 5. What is the role of the preacher?
 6. What are some of the theological and pastoral concerns you consider in preparing a worship service?
 7. How do you choose a sermon topic?
 8. What exegetical method do you use with a Biblical passage?
 9. How do you prepare to write a sermon?
 10. What is your theology of baptism? Of Communion?
 11. What are some of the unique circumstances you will face as a Commissioned Lay Pastor?
 12. Why do you wish to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor?

OUTCOME OF THE COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR EXAMINATION

- CPM may recommend to the Committee on Ministry that the individual is ready to be commissioned as a Commissioned Lay Pastor without reservation.
- CPM may recommend to the Committee on Ministry that the individual is ready to be commissioned as a Commissioned Lay Pastor with reservation.
- CPM may request the individual to resubmit any of the materials.
- CPM may recommend that the Trainee not be certified as ready to be commissioned as a lay preacher. In this case, the individual may continue service as an AP unless forbidden to do so.