**Maumee Valley Presbytery Commissioned Ruling Elder Program**

Purpose: The CRE program is designed to enable ruling elders within the churches of Maumee Valley Presbytery (MVP), or ministers of other traditions, without the necessary qualifications of an Ordained Teaching Elder, to pursue the necessary training to provide competent pastoral ministry to churches of MVP. As such this program is an alternative to the traditional training of seminary-educated ministers. This program is designed as an additional way to meet the needs of churches seeking competent pastoral ministry. The MVP Discipleship Commission (DC) (as it oversees those duties traditionally performed by a Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) assembles a Preparation for Ministry Team (PMT) for each inquirer/candidate and oversees a single Commissioned Ruling Elder Team (CRE Team or CRET) for all CRE students. Those completing the process (“CRE students” or “students”) to the satisfaction of the DC/CRE Team will operate under the provisions for Commissioned Ruling Elders in the PC(USA) Book of Order (G-2.10).

CRE Team/Discipleship Commission Responsibilities:

* Promoting and overseeing CRE program within MVP
* Developing/securing curriculum for the program
* Interviewing applicants to CRE program (regular track and alternate track for those with prior experience in other denominations/related positions)
* Connecting each student with a mentor for consistent communication and guidance throughout the program.
* Tracking students’ progress using the Checklist for Completion of the Process of Preparation for Ministry in the Maumee Valley Presbytery (“Checklist”)
* Coordinating CRE students’ completion of coursework in Old and New Testament, Biblical Interpretation, Reformed Theology/History, Christian Life, Mission/Evangelism, Teaching the Bible, Pastoral Care, Polity/Administration, Worship/Sacraments
* Planning and leading 6-session Training Leaders to Preach (“Preaching”) class every 2 years
* Pairing preaching class students with host churches/pastors for preaching experience and mentoring
* Arranging additional cohort experiences to engage students in the review of online courses, provide instruction in areas not covered by online courses, and offer specific training for sacrament administration and moderating session as appropriate.
* Offering possibilities for supervised ministry experiences for students, possibly including additional authorization of ecclesiastical services (moderating session, administering sacraments)
* Providing for a psychological evaluation for CRE students
* Examining CRE students to ascertain competency for becoming a CRE and decide whether to recommend to COM
* Creating opportunities for collegial connections among CREs in MVP
* Coordinating possibility of sharing program with nearby presbyteries

Program Overview:

* Application paperwork, normally enrolling simultaneously as an Inquirer (requires additional forms) in the preparation for ministry process
* Interview by DC/PMT/CRET
* Assignment of mentor
* Psychological assessment conducted with an agency approved by DC/PMT/CRET
* 10 online courses over the course of 2 years (presently through Union Presbyterian Seminary’s “Pathways to Learning and Leadership”)
  1. Biblical Interpretation
  2. New Testament Bible Survey
  3. Old Testament Bible Survey
  4. Reformed Theology/Church History
  5. The Christian Life
  6. Mission/Evangelism
  7. Teaching the Bible
  8. Pastoral Care
  9. Polity/Administration
  10. Worship/Sacraments
* MVP Preaching Class
* Additional cohort experiences to engage students in the review of online courses, provide instruction in areas not covered by online courses, and offer specific training for sacrament administration and moderating session as appropriate
* Internship or other supervised ministry experience to implement practical training
* Annual consultation with DC/CRET
* Final consultation and examination with DC/CRET
* Determination of desired and recommended scope of pastoral responsibilities sought
* Examination and Approval by Presbytery (G-2.1002)
* Commissioning to a church

Time Commitment

The program typically takes 24-30 months to complete. This is based on a student’s timely involvement with courses, retreats, and classes as they are offered. Learning opportunities that are missed due to personal crises must be made up at the first opportunity in which they are reoffered. In all cases the program must be completed in its entirety within an additional 12 month grace period following the initial 30 month anticipated completion period. Exceptions to this may be granted by the DT/CRET due to special circumstances but they are under no obligation to do so.

Policy Regarding Alternative Program Participation

For those who possess significant life skills, ministry experience, and/or some level of educational accomplishment that may especially serve them in becoming successful CREs, the DC/CRET may determine that taking the full schedule of courses is unnecessary for some applicants. The DC/CRET will consider on a case by case basis whether a potential candidate can be waived or exempted from any part of the CRE training, and design appropriate alternative means as needed in order to meet the competency requirements set out in the CRE program. If an applicant feels that they may be eligible for exemption from some requirements, they should send along with their application a request for a waiver or exemption along with the reason and supporting documentation (resume, educational credentials, life experience in ministry, references, etc.) as to why such a waiver or exemption should be considered. Note: ALL CRE students will be expected to complete an online polity course.

Limitations and Expectations of students and CREs: It is imperative that all students, commissioned ruling elders and the churches associated with them understand the following limitations and expectations:

1. CREs as a rule cannot serve the church of which they are a member upon completion of the program. Any request for an exception to this rule must be taken to the DC/CRET and the Leadership Commission/Committee on Ministry (COM).
2. CREs serve in similar roles to ordained Teaching Elders. As such they are held to the same expectations as Teaching Elders regarding the end of a pastoral relationship. Any commissioned candidate must immediately vacate their relationship with the church they are commissioned to upon completion of their commissioned ministry assignment to that church (even if it is the church in which they are a member) for a period of at least 12 months. This must be firmly understood and agreed upon prior to any commissioning by MVP to a church.
3. Upon completion of the program, the DC/CRET shall decide which ecclesiastical functions a CRE may provide to the commissioned church. It is not to be assumed that a CRE will be able to moderate session and administer the sacraments unless specifically assigned those responsibilities by the Leadership Commission/COM (G-2.1001). Any assigned responsibilities are unique to the church of commissioning. They are not a right or privilege to be used presbytery-wide.
4. The DC/CRET is not responsible for finding a church for the CRE to serve. The CRE may consult with Leadership Commission/COM and Presbytery staff for assistance in contacting churches with pastoral needs. The terms of service for each commissioning will be determined by the CRE and the church’s session with approval from the Leadership Commission/COM and must be renewed yearly.
5. CREs serving a congregation are expected to attend meetings of the presbytery and are permitted voice and vote privileges. In addition, it is expected that CREs serving a church participate in the work of the presbytery’s commissions and committees as allowable within their schedule.
6. CREs will be assigned a minister of the Word and Sacrament as a mentor and supervisor (G-2.1004).
7. CREs serving a congregation are expected to be involved in continuing education as a part of their continuance in their commission.

Cost: The approximate cost for the entire program is $1500. In addition, there will be costs for required books. Financial assistance in the forms of scholarships and or grants may be available to certain students on an individual basis at the discretion of the DC/CRET.

Application:Maumee Valley Presbytery has created a Checklist of the Completion of the Process of Preparation for Ministry, which can be found on the MVP website.All forms referenced on this checklist can be downloaded at [https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/](about:blank). As indicated on this checklist, each applicant student should complete the Inquirer Application Forms 1A and 1B; their sponsoring session must complete Form 1D. (Form 1C anticipates financial costs of attending a theological institution. Applicants intending to pursue the CRE student track do not have to complete Form 1C.) Enrolling as an inquirer in the preparation for ministry process will create an official covenant relationship between the applicant and the Presbytery, give them official standing in the preparation for ministry process, as well as create the potential for engaging in some form of supervised service prior to commissioning (G-2.0606). Additional questions for applications to the CRE program are found at the end of this packet. An initial interview will be requested by the DC/PMT/CRET to acquire the additional information necessary to enhance the student’s successful completion of the program.

Qualifications: The program is open to:

1. Active members in a PC(USA) church who have served as a ruling elder for a minimum of one year and endorsed by his or her local session.

or

1. Ministers from faith expressions outside of PC(USA) desiring to serve a church within MVP who fail to meet the PC(USA) standards for ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder)

who

1. Have public affirmation of a call to ministry.
2. Are capable of college level work.
3. Willingly embrace the process with enthusiasm, openness, and humility. This is a process of disciplined learning and experiential training in PC(USA) pastoral ministry within the Reformed Tradition for the purpose of serving a particular community of faith in MVP.
4. Willingly abide by the oversight of the DC/CRET and honor the normal standards for ethical ministerial conduct (included in this packet).

Additional Details:

1. Students will be responsible for enrolling in Union Presbyterian Seminary’s Pathways to Learning and Leadership online courses and secure the necessary equipment (device with internet connection) to participate in the classes. Students will be required to purchase all necessary books and resource material required to complete the class. The cost is $100-125 per class and is the responsibility of the student. The DC/CRET will assist in making all the information available to assist the student in this process.
2. Students will be required to attend on-site learning opportunities for the MVP Preaching Class as well as additional cohort experiences to engage students in the review of online courses, provide instruction in areas not covered by online courses, and offer specific training for sacrament administration and moderating session as appropriate. Every attempt will be made to coordinate these sites and times within a convenient framework for all the students. Students must be willing to make sacrifices in terms of time and distance in order to engage with these important opportunities.
3. Students will be required to meet the standards and complete all assignments and tasks within the scope of this program in a timely fashion. Part of effective ministry is the disciplined use of time and talent and leading by example. A premium will be placed on quality of work within the standards set forth for each assignment. Students are being trained for excellence. The DC/CRET will make every attempt to clearly communicate expectations and deadlines.
4. Students will be provided a mentor to help them through the process. These mentors should be utilized as helpful sources of information and valuable resources of experience. They are provided to help the student succeed in the program and in any commissioned ministry that follows.
5. Students will need to demonstrate some form of experiential proficiency in the ministry for which they are commissioned. As such, some form of internship, supervised ministry, or other participatory exercise will be assigned by the DC/CRET. MVP is entrusting the churches of our faith community into the care of those commissioned and must be assured of some form of ministerial proficiency, pastoral competency, and ecclesiastical accountability of those commissioned.

Competency Standards

**Specific Areas requiring Competency:**

1. A Personal Faith Framework & Sense of Call
2. Reformed Theology
3. Sacraments & Reformed Worship/Liturgy
4. Preaching
5. Pastoral Care & Leadership
6. Polity
7. Biblical Knowledge, Teaching & Articulation of the Gospel
8. Christian Virtue & Personal Piety

**Nature of the Process:** The CRE Team believes that the process of determining competency is one that is both subjective and objective. In some cases the work already completed through classes and or experience is sufficient, in other cases written exams or testing may suffice, and in other cases direct dialogue and personal engagement may be needed. This process will occur following the completion of all coursework. We believe that competency is derived in two interdependent ways:

• One should have an adequate knowledge about the subject

• One will demonstrate a skill level in its application to the ministry

**Process for Evaluating Competency:**

1. Faith Framework & Sense of Call
   1. Written Statement of Faith shared and discussed
   2. Written Sense of Call shared and discussed
2. Reformed Theology
   1. Know the key elements of Reformed Theology and explain their importance to a local church
      1. Sovereignty
      2. Covenant
      3. Grace
      4. Faith
      5. Regeneration
      6. Love
      7. Kingdom
      8. Confessions
3. Sacraments & Reformed Worship/Liturgy
   1. Illustrate skill and simply explain the Lord’s Supper
   2. Illustrate skill and simply explain baptism
   3. illustrate skill and describe the movements of:
      1. Worship service
      2. Sacramental service
      3. Funeral service
4. Preaching
   1. Demonstrate the process of forming a sermon
   2. Provide the exegetical method work
   3. Illustrate skill in preaching
5. Pastoral Care & Leadership
   1. Explain the powers in the PC(USA) understanding of church government
   2. Explain the powers/functions of a pastor and of the session
   3. Illustrate a working knowledge of Robert’s Rules
   4. Describe pastoral care in various crisis moments
6. Biblical Knowledge, Teaching & Articulation of the Gospel
   1. Passing the online Bible Survey courses
   2. Provide an example of some form of Christian Education
   3. Share how scripture(s) shape and influence your personal life
   4. Verbally offer an explanation of the gospel
7. Christian Virtue & Personal Piety
   1. Describe your personal spiritual habits and practices
   2. Describe your personal expressions of actions of charity

**Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers including CREs**

**As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, 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 public ministry. 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 office of ministry, 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 my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Preach, teach, and 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 my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
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 for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
17. Consult with the Committee on Ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

**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 colleagues in ministry;
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.
5. These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

**CRE Program Additional Questions**

Write a response to each of the following. These responses should be attached along with the Inquirer Application Forms 1A and 1B.

1. Describe briefly what it means to you to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder? What has motivated you to consider this program? What gifts do you bring to the ministry? (approximately 200-400 words)
2. Write a brief statement of your personal understanding of the sacraments. (approximately 200-400 words)

**Personal Commitment of CRE Applicants:**

In signing this application, I understand and agree to the following:

1. The CRE Program is an opportunity to be trained for pastoral ministry for churches with MVP and as such requires academic growth, spiritual development, personal discipline, and ministry proficiency. It is essential that I am fully committed to this process.
2. I am accountable to the Discipleship Commission and the CRE Team for my actions; inappropriate attitudes or behavior may disqualify me from the program.
3. I am responsible to adhere to the Standards of Ethical Conduct expected of all ministers. (see attached)
4. The terms and conditions of my commissioning upon completion of the program are at the discretion of the Leadership Commission/COM. I will engage in no ministry activity within MVP without the prior approval of these groups.
5. Upon completion of any ministry assignment, I will vacate my relationship with the church to which I was commissioned (even if it is the church of which I am a member) for a period of at least 12 months.
6. I am expected to complete the program within the time allotted and that beyond this period of time, the parts accomplished will have to be reassessed by the DC/CRET as to their value in any future engagement in CRE training.
7. Any pastoral ministry that I might engage in as a result of completing this program is a stewardship of God’s people requiring faithfulness to God and a trust extended by MVP requiring accountability to its leadership.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Please send this application with attachments to: Maumee Valley Presbytery, c/o CRE Team, 700 East Melrose, Findlay, OH 45839-0853.**