

# *Lay Pastors Manual*

*Presbytery of New Hope*

**MARCH 2005**

## **LAY PASTORS COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT**

**March 2005**

The Lay Pastor Committee (LPC) of the Presbytery of New Hope, PCUSA, is Christ's agent to facilitate the training and service of Elders whom God calls to become Lay Preachers, Lay Pastors or Commissioned Lay Pastors with our bounds.

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

COM	Committee on Ministry
LPC	Lay Pastor Committee
Lay Preacher	After completing 1 year of LP training
Lay Pastor	After completing 2 years of LP training
Commissioned LP	After receipt of a call, and approval of COM and Presbytery

## **1. What is a Commissioned Lay Pastor?**

2. *The commissioned lay pastor is an elder of the Presbyterian Church(USA), 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 designated by the Presbytery. (G-14. 0800).*
3. A commissioned lay pastor is an elder selected and trained by a presbytery to serve in a local congregation as a temporary supply in lieu of a Minister of the Word and Sacraments. CLP's may serve to fill pulpits while ministers are on vacation or sabbatical, or are for some other reason unable to fulfill pastoral duties. They may also fill the pulpit when a church is between pastors, but *do not serve as interim pastors*. With approval of presbytery CLP's may be called to serve a small church that cannot secure a Minister of Word and Sacraments. CLP's are limited however, in the duties they may perform for the church. The presbytery depending on need and circumstances designates specific duties. (see role of Presbytery) (Minutes of COM, Dec. 5, 2000)

## **4. Process of becoming a CLP, Lay Pastor, and Lay Preacher.**

5. A candidate must be an ordained elder in good standing in the congregation of which he/she is a member.
6. Seek information and an application from the Presbytery.
7. Ask the Session of your church for endorsement and have them send it to presbytery.
8. Mail completed application to presbytery along with a 300 word essay entitled "Why I feel called to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor," a one page statement of faith and a one page biography.
9. Psychological vocational leadership testing, arranged through the LPC, must be completed within the first year of training.
10. An ordained minister will be identified and approved as a mentor for each candidate.
11. Attend the sexual misconduct prevention workshop provided by the presbytery.
12. Complete level one requirements.
13. Be evaluated by LPC to approved and placed on the supply preaching list and continue into level two.
14. Complete level two requirements.
15. Complete an evaluation process by the LPC.
16. Level two candidates who complete all requirements will receive a certificate of preparation and will be available to be commissioned to serve a particular church. Upon receipt of a call, COM will examine the candidate.

## 17. Assessing the Call.

18. *When women and men, by God's providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the church. (G6.0105).*
19. *To those called to exercise special functions in the church ..... God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church. )G6.0106).*
20. Becoming a lay pastor is not an easy decision. As stated in the *Book of Order*, reference above, a person who feels God moving them toward this type of ministry should first turn to their church for help in discerning God's will. The Session should pray with and for the person and recommend them to the program only if and when they feel the person's sense of call is genuine and divinely initiated.
21. The person wishing to become a Lay Pastor should possess the gifts, faith, dedication and a Christian life style appropriate for one called to lead and pastor God's people. In assisting the person to determine God's will the Session should look for these qualities and be attentive as well to the approval of the people in the congregation and the larger community. Appropriately, it is often the church that first recognizes the gifts for lay leadership; and therefore, a member or group of the congregation may suggest to the person or the Session that new avenues of ministry should be explored.
22. *It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve in it as officers shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in The Book of Confessions and the Form of Government. (G-6.0108).*
23. A Lay Pastor, like any ordained member of the PC(USA), has responsibilities not only to the local church, but to the larger church as well. Therefore, applicants must be ordained Elders, willing to submit to the authority of Holy Scripture, the tenets of the Reformed faith, and the polity of the church. They should have an appreciation of and a willingness to support the work of the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly of the PC(USA).
24. The decision as to whether a person has departed from the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual, but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which she or he serves. (This may be the church, presbytery or a larger body, or a combination of these.) (G-1.0301, G-1.0302)

**25.** Persons wishing to apply to the LP program should familiarize themselves with the Constitutional provisions governing CLP's in G-14.0801, with particular emphasis on the questions to be asked at commissioning (G-14.0801e).

## **26. Becoming a Candidate**

27. Applicants to the Lay Pastor program must understand the importance of the support of their Session and church. Once they have this support they may make application through the presbytery. The application process includes an essay describing their 'calling' into the ministry of the lay pastor, the completed application form, a brief statement of faith, and a short biography. These, along with the endorsement of the Session, will be the beginning of an in-depth and lengthy training program. Persons making application should be advised up front by their Session and the presbytery of the time, commitment and expense involved in becoming a Lay Preacher, Lay Pastor or Commissioned Lay Pastor.
28. Each candidate is required to participate in psychological/vocational testing arranged by the presbytery. The cost is to be shared by the applicant, presbytery, and endorsing church. Formal admittance to the Lay Pastor program is contingent upon a satisfactory report submitted by Career/Counseling personnel approved by COM.
29. Each candidate will be appointed an ordained minister mentor. This mentor should be someone familiar with the candidate and available to him/her throughout the educational process. (see appendix for mentor job description)

## EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

30. *The Elder shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. (G-14.0801a).*
31. Please refer to LPC schedule of training requirements and events as it is from time to time revised.
32. The level one and two training program consists of 170 hours (spread over one academic year) of course work and study. The candidates meet on a monthly basis from September through June. Each candidate must complete all course work including a local 'Disciples' Bible study class or an on-line Bible course with Dubuque Seminary.
33. The candidate is responsible for all written assignments, which should be turned into the specific instructor for evaluation. The instructor will send assignments, with his/her comments, to the presbytery staff person assigned to the Lay Pastors subcommittee. Candidates may view their assignments and instructors comments at the presbytery office, but may not take anything from his/her file without permission from the LPC.
34. Required courses are offered at a central location once each year. Realizing that absences are inevitable, the LPC may approve allowances on an individual basis. In these cases, the candidate may make up the course work or may take the course in another year.

## ANNUAL RETREAT

35. All candidates, CLP's, mentors, and LPC members will come together once a year for a retreat. Each year the retreat will have a different focus, (ie; small church dynamics, spirituality, leadership skills, etc) and will serve to enrich the ministry of the LP program. Instructional credit will be given for attendance.

## FEES

36. The current fee is \$50.00 for each scheduled course. This amount is subject to change as courses are evaluated and restructured. The candidate will receive one complementary copy of the *Book of Order* and *The Book of Confessions*.
37. This fee does not include the cost of the books, Bible study curriculum, retreat expenses, mileage to and from training activities or meals. Candidates will be responsible for all these expenses.

## **CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION -level one**

38. After completion of the required course work, the LPC will evaluate the candidate. Upon approval of the LPC the candidate will receive a Certificate of Completion stating that she/he has successfully completed level one. The committee will then recommend the candidate to the COM for approval to serve as a supply preacher within the bounds of the Presbytery of New Hope (see role of Presbytery), and to continue into level two training.

## **LEVEL TWO REQUIREMENTS**

39. Lay Preachers seeking to participate in level two training must submit a letter of interest to the LPC along with a list of preaching engagements from the previous year. Applicants who have been inactive for one year or more must reapply to the program including a letter stating why they have been inactive and why they wish to be reactivated. The LPC will approve or deny entry into level two training.

## **CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION -level two**

40. After completion of the required course work, the LPC will evaluate the candidate. Upon approval of the committee the candidate will receive a Certificate of Completion stating that she/he has completed level two training. The LPC will forward names of the level two candidates to the COM for approval to receive a call from a local church. (see role of Presbytery). COM will not examine a candidate for commissioning until a call is received.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

41. Once a candidate has completed the course requirements and received the certification of preparation or commissioning, she/he is required to have eight contact hours of continuing education annually. These courses must be Presbyterian conferences, workshops, etc., or otherwise be approved by the LPC. Examples: Growing Together, S.T.A.R.T., presbytery meetings held periodically throughout each year, Montreat, Massanetta Springs conferences, Synod Presbyterian Women's conferences, approved seminary course, workshops and conferences, and approved local church events. The candidate must submit written documentation of continuing education to the LPC, as well as a list of annual preaching engagements.

## THE ROLE OF PRESBYTERY

### Recruiting and Training

42. *The commissioned lay pastor is an elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), 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 designated by the presbytery. Such an elder is selected by and receives training approved by the presbytery. .... The elder shall be examined by the appropriate committee of presbytery as to personal faith motives for seeking the commission, and areas of instruction mentioned previously. (G-14. 0801 a).*
43. The LPC works under the direction of the Presbytery of New Hope's Committee on Ministry. As the representing body of the COM, the LPC has the responsibility of recruiting, training, commissioning and nurturing Lay Preachers, Lay Pastors and Commissioned Lay Pastors to serve in local congregations that cannot for whatever reason secure an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacraments. The LPC is made up of three classes of three members with a diverse number of elders and ministers representing the constituency of the Presbytery, nominated and elected by the Presbytery. In addition there will be three liaison members from the COM. The chair of the LPC is a member of COM and reports directly to that body on behalf of the LPC. All work of the LPC is supervised and approved by the COM, and ultimately by the presbytery.
44. With the aid of the local church, the LPC identifies those with special gifts for the lay pastorate (G-6.0106). The LPC reviews and responds to the applicant. Candidates for CLP come under the care of the endorsing church, minister mentor and the LPC.
45. The educational program is offered annually if there is a minimum of six applicants for that particular level. (The minimum requirement is due to the cost of the training.) Each level, one and two, will be offered at least biyearly. The LPC is responsible for recruiting qualified instructors for each discipline, and arranging the date, time, and location for each course. Special care is taken to offer the best training possible within the means of the LPC.
46. Throughout the training process, the LPC stays in contact with each candidate to offer encouragement and answer questions. An annual retreat brings the LPC together with the candidates and other commissioned lay pastors for specific instruction, mutual support and fellowship. The retreat offers the LPC members an opportunity to get to know the candidates better and vice versa. It also serves to strengthen the overall program by connecting candidates with those already commissioned and supporting CLP's in their current ministries.
47. The CLP program benefits from the educational opportunities offered by the Presbytery through the Division of Congregational Ministries, namely Growing Together and S.T.A.R.T. {see educational requirements for a description of these.

events). Candidates are required to attend these events participating in classes that are recommended by the LPC.

48. The LPC evaluates each candidate annually and makes a recommendation to COM as to his/her effectiveness as a CLP. A Certificate of Preparation will be granted to those satisfactorily completing the educational requirements. The LPC may recommend that more preparation is needed, or that the candidate does not meet the necessary requirements to be commissioned. These recommendations are sent to COM. Only COM has the authority to place candidates on the temporary supply list for the presbytery. Level two candidates will also be available to be commissioned to a particular congregation.

## COMMISSIONING

49. *The commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as determined by the presbytery. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery. Presbytery shall regularly provide resources for the person's spiritual and intellectual development. A review of the work of the commissioned lay pastor shall be conducted annually. Presbytery shall revoke the commission of any lay pastor who does not abide by these provisions or whose work is evaluated as not adequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation. (G-14.080 1. b)*
50. *When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned lay pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in 1 - 6 below... (G-14.0801.c).*
51. *A temporary supply may be a .... commissioned lay pastor ..... secured by the session to conduct services when there is no pastor or the pastor is unable to perform pastoral duties. The session shall seek the counsel of presbytery through its committee on ministry before securing a temporary supply. (G-14.0513.d).*
52. Candidates who have successfully completed level two training may be commissioned to serve a particular congregation as part-time temporary supply. COM will counsel churches that may be best served by a CLP or who make a request for a CLP, and appoint a liaison to work with the church throughout the process. Once the church has issued an invitation to a particular candidate, the Examinations Committee of COM will examine the candidate as to his/her preparedness and qualifications. (This exam will be similar in nature to the exam given Minister of Word and Sacrament being called by a church.) Hearing the recommendation of the Examinations Committee, the COM will vote to recommend the candidate to the floor of presbytery for examination and approval for commissioning.

53. A church may request that a CLP be able to perform certain functions here-to-for reserved for a Minister of the Word and Sacraments. The Book of Order authorizes six functions, four of which are approved for New Hope Presbytery:
- a. Administering the Lord's Supper
  - b. Administering the Sacrament of Baptism
  - c. Having a voice in meetings of the presbytery
  - d. Having a vote in meetings of presbytery (as an elder commissioner)
54. The Presbytery establishes the precedent for which these functions a CLP may be commissioned to perform. With the satisfactory completion of levels one and two training, and with a call in hand, a CLP may be approved for any or all of these four, pending a successful interview by the Examinations Committee, endorsement by the COM, and the vote of the presbytery. When a lay pastor receives a call and is approved by COM to accept the call, a written agreement is established through COM as to what functions the CLP will perform for the church. Although he/she is contracted through presbytery, the church is responsible for the financial compensation and Christian nurture of the CLP, just as would be the case for an ordained clergy. Compensation depends upon the circumstances of the church, the number of hours expected from the CLP, and the needs of the CLP. The COM has established basic guidelines for full time service paid at presbytery's current minimum full time salary. The CLP call is valid only for the church which issued the call, and the CLP is not to be members of that particular congregation.

## NURTURE AND DISCIPLINE

- 55. The commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as determined by the presbytery. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery. Presbytery shall regularly provide resources for the person's spiritual and intellectual development. A review of the work of the commissioned lay pastor shall be conducted annually. Presbytery shall revoke the commission of any lay pastor who does not abide by these provisions or whose work is evaluated as not adequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation. (G-14.0801.b)*
56. The presbytery may elect to commission a lay pastor for up to three years. Whatever the time period, the commission may be renewed as long as the relationship between the church, the CLP, and the presbytery is satisfactory. Reviews will be conducted annually by the LPC and reported to COM; usually in the fall of the year. The church's pastoral relations committee will also conduct annual reviews. Each congregation in which a lay pastor serves must establish a pastoral relations committee whose purpose is to provide to the lay pastor ongoing support and encouragement, and to facilitate communication between the lay pastor and congregation.
57. For the annual review the CLP is required to have documentation of at least eight contact hours of continuing education. The presbytery offers these opportunities through the Division of Congregational Ministries and Leadership Division. The CLP will be informed of continuing education events sponsored by the presbytery. She/he may also attend educational

events offered at Presbyterian seminaries and conference centers. The LPC must approve events sponsored by non-Presbyterian in order for them to be included in the eight hours. CLP's are also invited to attend the annual LPC retreat.

- 58.** The annual review will also cover evaluations by the church, the CLP, and members of the presbytery staff. The LPC may request other information that would aid them in evaluating the CLP (i.e.: Sessional records, sermons).
- 59.** If at any time during the relationship between a CLP and a local church the session feels that the CLP is not properly or satisfactorily performing his/her duties, the session should first meet with the CLP to discuss its concerns. If this does not prove successful, then the clerk of session should contact the COM.
- 60.** If the CLP has acted in a manner unsuitable to his/her position, she/he may be terminated or disciplined according to the *Rules of Discipline* of the Book of Order. If the concern is in the manner of not fulfilling pastoral duties to the satisfaction of the congregation, then the COM may elect to terminate, or instruct the LPC to give the CLP the necessary guidance and training to improve his/her pastoral skills. A church may not terminate a CLP without the approval of COM.
- 61.** If the CLP is unhappy with the pastoral arrangement, she/he should contact the LPC for guidance. The action of the LPC would depend upon the circumstance and the guidance of COM. If the CLP wishes to terminate his/her relationship, the COM may grant or deny the request, and would counsel the session and the CLP as to their future options. (Refer to Presbytery's policy on discipline.)