

**COM GUIDELINES**  
**RULING ELDERS COMMISSIONED TO PASTORAL SERVICE**  
**Presbytery of Cincinnati**

**PLACEMENT**

A ruling elder may be commissioned to pastoral service in churches deemed appropriate by the Committee on Ministry.

Ordinarily, he or she will serve for a maximum of half-time (24 hours/week) in the first year of any commission. Any expansion of hours must be approved by COM on a case by case basis, and be implemented after the person has been commissioned for one year.

At the recommendation of COM, a ruling elder experienced in pastoral service may be commissioned to more than one position simultaneously. Amended 1/5/10

No person shall be commissioned by the presbytery for a staff position in a congregation served by a teaching elder.

Assuming a ruling elder will maintain his or her pre-commission church membership, he or she will not be commissioned to serve a congregation in which he or she is a member.

**FUNCTIONS (G-2.1001)**

**Moderator Duties**

Ordinarily, COM will recommend that a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service be granted the authority to moderate meetings of the session of the congregation under the supervision of and when invited by the Moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery. Before such authority is granted, the ruling elder will have received instructions and demonstrated a working knowledge of PCUSA polity.

After a period of one year, with the concurrence of the mentor, COM and the session of the congregation being serviced, the ruling elder may be appointed as the moderator of session of the church.

**Sacraments**

Ordinarily, COM will recommend that a commissioned ruling elder be granted authority to administer the **Sacraments** within the boundaries of the ministry needs of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned. We note that it is only to the congregation or validated ministry to which he or she is commissioned. The ruling elder shall follow the same guidelines that instruct a teaching elder and secure Session approval before administering the Sacraments.

**Marriage**

Marriage is not a Sacrament in the PCUSA. A ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may officiate at marriages where permitted by state law, invited by the Session and authorized by the presbytery. COM recommends that CLP's not be given this privilege *carte blanc*. Permission to Officiate at marriages will be governed by the following requirements:

Prior to conducting the pre-marital counseling, a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service shall review with his or her mentor all materials that are to be used, and shall discuss with the mentor the counseling process. After the mentor is satisfied with the ruling elder's competence in this area, the mentor should report to COM and this requirement may be removed.

A ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may officiate only at the marriage of a member of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned or of immediate family members of that congregation.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI**

### **Voice and Vote**

Ordinarily, the Committee on Ministry shall recommend that the presbytery give a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service voice and vote at presbytery meetings.

Amended to include vote: March 1, 2005

### **Mentor and Supervisor**

G-2.1003 states: The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery. The presbytery may at any time withdraw the commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient. A teaching elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.

### **Commissioning**

Ordinarily, the commissioning service shall take place during a meeting of the Presbytery. The moderator of the Presbytery shall ask the ruling elder being commissioned to answer questions W-4.4003a-h and i(4).

### **Review of Ruling Elder Commissioned to Pastoral Service**

Initial review of the relationship between the commissioned ruling elder and the congregation will occur at 6 months. The review will include the mentor, a representative from COM's CLP Sub-committee, a representative from the session, and the ruling elder. Amended inclusions 1/5/10  
First yearly review will include separate interviews with the ruling elder and representatives from session by COM representatives and CLP subcommittee representatives. 2nd and 3rd year review should model the Presbytery's policy on triennial visits. Amended inclusions 1/5/10

Commission to pastoral service shall be limited to one year for the first three years.

Commissions may be renewed after that for a period of up to three years. Amended 3 yr renewal 1/5/10

## **REVIEW OF THESE GUIDELINES**

COM shall review these guidelines one year from the date of their adoption.

ADOPTED by COM on July 2, 2002

Reviewed December 2, 2003; January 2009

Subsequent revisions are noted in body of text

Edited to conform to the *Book of Order* July 2011