

# Trained Ruling Elder/Commissioned Ruling Elder (TRE/CRE)

## Policy

### Flint River Presbytery

Approved by Presbytery

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*01/01/14*

# Commissioned Ruling Elder Program Of Flint River Presbytery

*TRE=Trained Ruling Elder    CRE=Commissioned Ruling Elder    CRE MT=CRE Ministry Team  
Committee on Ministry = COM*

<u>Table of Contents</u>		<u>Page</u>
Section I.	Role and Purpose of TRE/CRE Program	3
Section II.	Overview of CRE Training Program	3
Section III.	Administration of TRE/CRE Program	3 - 4
Section IV.	Training Program	5
Section V.	Guidelines for Instructors and Students	5 - 6
Section VI.	Completion of Training	6
Section VII.	Commissioning Process	6
Section VIII.	Mentoring and COM Supervision of CREs	6
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Appendix 1	Pastor/Session Endorsement	7
Appendix 2	Application Package	8 - 10
Appendix 3	Background Check	11
Appendix 4	Sample Covenant between CRE and Church	12 - 13
Appendix 5	Mentor Program	14 - 16

## **Section I. Role and Purpose of TRE/CRE Program**

Given the reality of the lack of availability of Teaching Elders and the ability of some churches to support full time ministry, Flint River Presbytery, following the directives and guidelines contained in the Book of Order, section G-2.10 ff., has established a program for the training, development and certification of Commissioned Ruling Elders. The roles and purposes of this program are as follows:

1. Provide pastoral leadership, preaching and administration of sacraments for smaller churches within the bounds of the Flint River Presbytery, especially those that cannot support or sustain a full time teaching elder.
2. To provide a ready source of pulpit supply preachers for all churches that may need the services of a preacher on any given Sunday.
3. To train, develop and prepare those who are called and who are willing to contribute their unique talents to the service of Christ's church in this presbytery.

## **Section II. Overview of TRE/CRE Training Program**

- A. The CRE training program is a 2-year program.
- B. Training is open to any ruling elder who is a member of the Flint River Presbytery. An endorsement from the elder's current pastor (appendix 1) is required; and an application (appendix 2) with Session endorsement; and a background check (appendix 3).
- C. The curriculum will include Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, teaching, training in Biblical studies, and worship, and anything else required by the Book of Order.
- D. In addition to the classroom instruction students may put into practice what they have learned through an internship supervised by a teaching elder. This internship could be individually tailored to the needs of each student as determined by the CRE MT. In addition the CRE MT may require that a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) be taken as part of the preparation for becoming a CRE. At the end of their practical training, students will prepare a written summary of their experiences including an interaction with a patient in a hospital setting for the CRE MT along with a written report from their supervising teaching elder. The supervised internship and CPE training (if required) should ordinarily occur after the end of the second year of classroom training.

## **Section III. Administration of the TRE/CRE Program**

- A. The COM will be responsible for the implementation of the training program including but not limited to the cost of the program to each participant, the pay to teachers, and the curriculum.

B. *Responsibilities*

- |                 |     |   |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| COM             | 1.  | Organize training program, recruit instructors and select students.   |
| RE Student      | 2.  | Complete necessary application packet.  |
| Pastor, Session | 3.  | Endorse and support student.  |
| CRE MT          | 4.  | Reviews applications and informs students if they qualify.  |
|                 | 5.  | Oversees training program.  |
| RE Student      | 6.  | Participate in the training program; complete all necessary requirements.   |
| CRE MT          | 7.  | Evaluate findings and make recommendations to COM for its deliberations for possible examination of the candidate.  |
| COM             | 8.  | Examine candidate as to personal faith, and the areas of instruction.   |
| RE Student      | 9.  | Internship (see page 5)   |
| COM             | 10. | When a contract is offered, interview the TRE and Sessional representatives; and if the way be clear, recommend Presbytery approve the commissioning of the Ruling Elder. The commission shall be valid for a period of up to 3 yrs as determined by Presbytery. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time by Presbytery. |
|                 | 11. | Determine those functions the candidate should be authorized to perform in the commission.  |
|                 | 12. | Assign a mentor for the CRE. The mentor shall be a teaching elder in the PCUSA.   |
| CRE MT          | 13. | Provide resources for the CRE continuing education.   |
| CRE             | 14. | Serve the assigned commission, working under the supervision of Presbytery through the moderator of session or through COM and its assigned mentor.   |
|                 | 15. | Continue education in the ministry  |
| CRE MT          | 16. | Review CRE's performance annually and determine if renewal of the commission is appropriate.  |

#### **Section IV. TRE Training Program**

- A. Training sessions will ordinarily be held once a month on Saturdays with breaks in the schedule to accommodate holidays and special seasons of the Christian year. Training sessions may also be combined and held as an overnight training event. The CRE MT will decide the actual schedule and location of the training sessions to best fit the needs of the students and instructors. This schedule will be prepared before the beginning of the training so that the students can schedule their times accordingly.
- B. Instructors will be paid an honorarium and mileage.
- C. The duties and activities of the supervised CRE internship will include the following:
  - 1. Attendance at Session meetings
  - 2. Attendance at worship at least twice a month
  - 3. Attendance at other committee meetings, as arranged and as practical
  - 4. At least three discussions with the pastor or moderator of Session about the ongoing leadership responsibilities and dynamics within the church
  - 5. Conducting at least two worship services, including the sermon, with feedback from the pastor and at least three members of the congregation
- D. The CRE MT will recruit churches in the Presbytery to provide internship opportunities and will place the TRE students based on their individual needs.
- E. The TRE intern and the supervising pastor will prepare a written report on the intern experience at the end of the internship for the CRE MT. The CRE MT may also request that interim updates be provided as deemed necessary.
- F. The CRE MT, if it determines that it is appropriate, can require a TRE student to take CPE. The cost of the CPE training is the responsibility of the TRE student. If this is a burden, then financial aid may be requested.

#### **Section V. Guidelines for Instructors and Students**

- A. Instructors are expected to provide written feedback to students and the CRE MT in a timely manner. Assignments from the students should be returned with comments for improvements.
- B. Instructors should provide a summary of each student's performance to the CRE MT.
- C. Attendance is required for all class sessions. If a student misses a class the options for making up the class will be determined by the Instructor. If makeup is not possible then the student does not satisfactorily meet the requirement for training on that topic. The extra cost for making up a class is to be paid by the student.

- D. A student must satisfactorily complete all portions of the training program in order to graduate from the program.
- E. Students are to turn assignments at designated due date.

### **Section VI. Completion of Training**

- A. Upon completion of the preparation course work requirements, the TRE candidate will be examined in the areas of personal faith, and the subject areas covered in the course work. COM will examine the candidate.

### **Section VII. Commissioning Process**

- A. COM shall make a specific determination concerning the Session's request that a TRE candidate be commissioned after meeting with the TRE and representatives of the Session.
- B. The COM has the responsibility for matching a Ruling Elder with a congregation. Normally, a CRE shall not serve in the church of his/her membership. However, COM may grant an exception to this, subject to annual review. Presbytery has the authority to commission the TRE. The COM shall recommend to Presbytery the commissioning of the RE to a specific church for a specific time and offer a written description of the TRE candidate's duties and compensation. A sample covenant agreement between the CRE candidate and church is given in Appendix 4.
- C. The Presbytery may appoint a commission to act on its behalf in the commissioning service of the CRE candidate during a worship service of the congregation in which the CRE will serve. The actual commissioning service shall include the specific requirements specified in the Book of Order G-2.1003.

### **Section VIII. Mentoring and COM Supervision of CRE**

- A. The CRE MT appoints a Mentor at the time the RE is commissioned. (appendix 5)
- B. The Mentor should be an ordained teaching elder member of the Flint River Presbytery.
- C. A CRE who is performing satisfactorily and whose commissioned status is recommended for continuation by all parties, shall be recommended to the Presbytery for renewal of his/her commission for a period of time not to exceed three years, subject to continuing satisfactory performance and ongoing active participation in a plan for continuing education approved by the CRE MT.

**Pastor's Endorsement for Level I Commissioned Ruling Elder Training**

To be completed by the applicant's pastor (or clerk of session if the church is without a pastor)

Please comment pertaining to the areas listed below. Use the reverse side of this sheet or attach additional page(s) if more space is needed. Your responses will be confidential and will be used only by the Presbytery's CRE MT in considering this person for enrollment in training to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

Christian Commitment and Maturity:

Leadership Ability:

Openness to Ideas and Learning:

Your Assessment of This Person's Suitability to Serve in This Way:

Other Comments You Wish To Add:

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

Please mail this completed form to:

CRE MT  
826 Liberty Expressway, SE  
Albany, Georgia 31705

## **Flint River Presbytery Flint River Application Packet for the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program**

### **Training Entrance Requirements Checklist:**

- Ordained Ruling Elder of PCUSA
- Member of a church in Flint River Presbytery
- Associate Degree (or Higher) and/or Equivalent Work Experience
- Desire to preach and learn more about God's Word in the Bible
- Commitment to attend classes one day per month for nine months, for each of two consecutive years
- Commitment to study at least 20 hours for each class
- Your pastor's endorsement (or your Session's, if the church doesn't have a pastor)
- This application completed and returned to Flint River Presbytery

Level I training focus is on Bible study and how to prepare and deliver a sermon. The instruction on sermon preparation will include training in exegesis, hermeneutics, homiletics, worship as well as several opportunities to practice sermons. This training prepares one to become a Lay Preacher and is the first step in the training required to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder. It should be understood that successful completion of Year 1 training does not guarantee one's entrance into the Year 2 Training program.

### **Application Procedure:**

1. You must be a ruling elder of the PCUSA and a member of a Presbyterian church in Flint River Presbytery to enter into this training program.
2. Have your pastor (or Clerk of Session if your church is without a Pastor) complete the Pastor's endorsement form.
3. Complete the application form and return it to the Presbytery Office at the address given on the application.
4. The Commissioned Ruling Elder Ministry Team will review the application and inform you if you qualify.
5. When a sufficient number of qualified applicants have been approved, a class schedule will be established and you will be notified regarding the start of the classes. (A minimum of five students is needed.)

## Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street / Apt

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ Zip

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_(H) \_\_\_\_\_(W) \_\_\_\_\_(mobile)

Church of Current Membership \_\_\_\_\_ (City) \_\_\_\_\_

Year you joined this Church \_\_\_\_\_

Total length of membership in the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) \_\_\_\_\_

Year Ordained as Ruling Elder \_\_\_\_\_

In what church/where? \_\_\_\_\_

### Statement of Commitment:

I hereby apply for admission to the Level I CRE Training Program of Flint River Presbytery. If accepted, I commit myself to participate fully in the scheduled activities and assignments. I understand I will be undertaking a commitment of both academic and practical nature. I also understand that successful completion of this training program is necessary before I can be considered for Commissioned Ruling Elder. I am also willing to commit myself to continuing education (in consultation with the CRE MT) after completing the program to maintain commissioning.

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

CRE Applicant

The Session of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church has endorsed this applicant for the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program of Flint River Presbytery.

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk of Session \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Educational Background: (List your high school and any further formal education you may have received. Begin with your most recent educational experience)

School and Location	Graduation Year	Degree (Major/Minor)
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Present Employment (Title, Nature of Work)

Briefly list your work history:

On a separate paper please respond to the following questions:

Why are you interested in becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder?

What gifts and talents do you have which will help you be effective serving a church?

What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?

Write a brief (300-600 word) description of your faith story. Include how your faith influenced your life and how you see yourself being called to participate in this program.

Describe your personal Bible study and prayer life practices.

Why would you like to move from learning about the Bible to preaching about the Bible?

*Return this application to: CRE MT  
826 Liberty Expressway, SE  
Albany, Georgia 31705*



Covenant with Commissioned Ruling Elder

Name of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of CRE: \_\_\_\_\_

Service from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

This relationship may be terminated prior to expiration with 30 days notice by either party and with the concurrence of the COM.

Responsibilities of CRE (Check those that apply)

- Lead worship and preach \_\_\_\_\_ times each month
- Administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
- Administer the Sacrament of Baptism
- Moderate Session Meetings
- Perform Marriages
- Other Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Expectations (per week) \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Days in Ministry (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Compensation (as applicable)

Cash Salary: \_\_\_\_\_ / week, month (circle)

Medical Coverage \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security withheld \_\_\_\_\_

Travel Reimbursement @ \$0.\_\_\_\_\_ per mile

Other Ministry Cost Reimbursement (Telephone, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing Education or Book Allowance \_\_\_\_\_

Housing Arrangements in the community \_\_\_\_\_

Vacation Time \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing Education Time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Commissioned Ruling Elder

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presbytery COM Moderator of Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Session Action

Expectations of the Commissioned Ruling Elder (Modify as appropriate)

1. He/she will serve as Moderator of the Session.

2. He/she will lead the congregation in worship by:
  - engaging in the daily discipline of personal worship.
  - encouraging the people to participate fully and regularly in worship
  - preaching each Sunday
  - administering the sacraments
  - leading special services as negotiated with the Session (up to four per year)
  - conducting weddings and funerals
  - conferring with the Worship Committee as to the components of the service
  - providing appropriate resources and information for the bulletin no later than \_\_\_\_\_
3. He/she will lead the congregation in Christian Education by:
  - assisting the Session in providing for the development and supervision of the educational program of the church.
4. He/she will lead in Pastoral Care by:
  - praying with and for the congregation
  - visiting members of the congregation \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week, with particular attention to the sick, bereaved, troubled, and church visitors
5. He/she will lead in Administration by:
  - working with the Session to assist it in implementing the church's ministry and mission
  - communicating with the congregation and with the presbytery
  - helping the Session set goals and strategies for his/her work
  - reporting monthly to the Session on his/her work
  - maintaining the following office hours at the church:

### **Expectations of the Session**

1. The Session will encourage and actively support the Commissioned Ruling Elder.
2. The Session will work with the CRE to establish goals for the present and future ministry of the church.
3. The Session will communicate openly and honestly with the CRE as to needs and concerns of the congregation and the community.

## **The Mentoring Process for CREs**

### **Guidelines for Mentors**

1. Mentors provide a vital line for Commissioned Ruling Elders. The role of the Mentor is to provide an objective “listening ear,” to act as a source of information and encouragement, and to provide professional and spiritual nurture.
2. Mentors should be minister members of Flint River Presbytery.
3. The Mentor-CRE relationship is for a one year period and may be renewed annually.

### **Characteristics of Mentors**

1. The Mentor must be a good role model. The way the Mentor relates to the CRE should demonstrate the same kind of openness and caring that is expected of the CRE in his/her ministry.
2. The Mentor should be approachable and non-judgmental. The Mentor should seek to listen empathetically to the concerns of the CRE before giving advice and present critiques in a positive manner.
3. The Mentor must be accessible to be effective. The Mentor should be willing to make time available for telephone conversations, emails, and face-to-face meetings. The Mentor and the CRE should meet or be in contact on a monthly basis.

### **The Covenant between Mentor and CRE**

The CRE is responsible for initiating and maintaining contact with the Mentor.

The Mentor is responsible for responding as quickly and appropriately as possible.

### **The Mentor’s Report to the Committee on Ministry’s CRE Ministry Team**

1. The Mentor is responsible to submit a brief written evaluation annually at a date determined by the CRE Ministry Team on the CRE’s performance and recommendations for continuing education for the CRE.

## **Mentor Evaluation Form**

Mentor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CRE's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How often since his/her commissioning have you been in contact? \_\_\_\_\_

What are his/her major strengths? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the major areas of growth for this CRE? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think that the CRE is successful at leading worship and preaching? \_\_\_\_\_

What suggestions would you make for the CRE? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

NAME OF CRE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CHURCH: \_\_\_\_\_

SERVICE FROM: \_\_\_\_\_ TO: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF MENTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

1. WRITE A BRIEF NARRATIVE DESCRIBING THE PASTORAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CRE, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE: (Use extra sheets, if necessary.)

2. RECORD THE CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENT FULFILLED BY THE CRE THIS YEAR.

3. MENTION ANY GROWING EDGES YOU BELIEVE THE CRE SHOULD BE AWARE OF:

SIGNED BY:

CRE MENTOR: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CRE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_