

Presbytery of Northern Waters
LAY LEADERSHIP PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK
For those pursuing Commissioned Lay Pastor Status

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DEFINITIONS, QUALIFICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS:

The Book of Order, in G.14.0801.a, gives definition to the term “commissioned lay pastor and tells us something about the preparation needed for this position. It says:

The commissioned lay pastor is an elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 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, new church development, or other validated ministries of the presbytery designated by the presbytery. Such an elder is selected by and receives training approved by the presbytery. The elder shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. The elder shall be examined by the appropriate committee of the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction mentioned previously.

The Manual of Operations of the Presbytery of Northern Waters defines this a bit further in II.L.213. It says:

1. To meet the needs of congregations unable to employ an ordained minister, the Presbytery may utilize qualified elders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as Commissioned Lay Pastors. Such persons may be commissioned for a designated period and given authority and responsibility to serve in one or more congregations within this Presbytery, subject to the requirements of the Book of Order
2. The function of Commissioned Lay Pastors in the Presbytery of Northern Waters shall be developed, directed, and supervised by a sub-committee of the Committee on Ministry designated Lay Pastors and Their Work (LPTW).

To summarize, in order to be commissioned as a lay pastor, a person must successfully complete training that includes instruction in at least all the areas mandated by the Book of Order. Candidates must also be ordained as elders before commissioning. Commissioning is for a specified period of time in a particular congregation or congregations; and in all preparation, continuing education and ongoing work, commissioned lay pastors will have the Lay Pastors and Their Work committee as their liaison with the Presbytery.

In order to apply for the program a person must:

1. have a high school diploma;
2. be an active member in their sponsoring congregation (generally the person will have been involved in this congregation for at least two years); and
3. have separate endorsements by the session and pastor/moderator of the congregation of which they are a member

Please note that admission to this program does not guarantee commissioning, nor does it guarantee a place on the Presbytery's supply preaching list.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Send a completed application form (available from the LPTW committee) to the Presbytery Center by the application deadline date. A statement of faith and a faith pilgrimage account must be included with this application; recommendations from your session and pastor/moderator are also required.
2. Establish a relationship with the LPTW committee by participating in an initial interview with the committee.

CURRICULUM AND EXPECTATIONS

Again we refer to the Book of Order at G.14.0801.a for a listing of the courses mandated for commissioned lay pastor preparation. The Presbytery of Northern Waters will offer these courses in a 2-3 year rotational system; other courses may be offered to supplement and meet specific needs, and as continuing education for those who have already completed the program.

Course descriptions for mandated courses are as follows. Each course will include some sort of accountability from students at the end of the course (in the form of a test, a paper, etc.). Students will be told the expectations of a particular class at each class beginning, as well as what specifics will be used to evaluate their learning. (Students should also note that a final evaluation will take place, covering all coursework, at the end of the program.)

Introduction to the Old Testament (*year one*)

This is an introductory survey course on the Old Testament which is intended to give students an idea of the flow of the history, geography, people, and theological development of the Old Testament. Time will be spent developing a sense of the historical background and major themes of the Old Testament, as well as providing a general overview of the contents of the types of books found in the Old Testament. The course will include a discussion of the theological importance that the Old Testament has to the New Testament, and will cover a basic understanding of the Old Testament's literary genre: history, poetry, prophetic literature, apocalyptic, etc. It will also focus upon basic exegetical skills (investigating the meaning of the text in its day) and hermeneutical skills (interpreting the text for today's listeners) needed for preaching and teaching.

Introduction to the New Testament (*year one*)

This is an introductory survey course on the New Testament which is intended to give students an overview of the development, time-line, geography, people and themes of the New Testament. Time will be spent developing a sense of the historical background of the New Testament and the order of its writing; the development of the literary genre in the New Testament (Gospel, history, letters, apocalyptic literature), and the roles these played in the early church. The course will also deal with exegetical and hermeneutical skills, and will discuss the critical and theological importance of the New Testament.

Preaching (*year one*)

An opportunity to consider the practical skills needed to develop a sermon from a biblical text. Consideration will be given to sermon styles and preaching delivery styles, as well as to considering the needs, expectations and context of those listening. This class may include an opportunity for participants to try out various preaching styles, and may also involve preaching in the presence of LPTW committee members in some context at a later date.

Reformed Theology and Sacraments (*year two*)

An introduction to Reformed theology, with an emphasis on the teachings of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox and other reformers and reformed movements. It will cover the tenets of the Reformed Faith, as well as those beliefs that define the Reformed Faith in comparison to other systems of belief. The course will also cover the theological concepts and foundation of the sacraments, as well as a rationale for why we celebrate Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Presbyterian Polity (*year two*)

This course uses the *Book of Order* and actual case studies to delve into the connection between the spiritual character of the Church and its human organization and system of agreed-upon rules of government. It will cover the content of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the make-up of the *Book of Order*, the structure and function of the governing bodies, and may include a look at the other governing bodies with which our General Assembly has relations.

Reformed Worship: Liturgy and Planning (*year two*)

The church, when it is most truly the church of Jesus Christ, is grounded, centered in and empowered by liturgical experience. This course will look at the essential elements of *The Directory for Worship*. Using *The Book of Common Prayer*, it will look at the elements of worship and cover the skills needed in planning and leading worship, speaking, reading Scripture, choosing hymns, etc. It will also introduce some of the resources available in planning worship services.

Introduction to Pastoral Care (*year three*)

This introductory course will deal with the needs of both the care giver and the care recipient, with an emphasis on listening, hospital visitation, boundary issues, ethical concerns, and referrals to other helping professionals. In this course the lay pastor is taught how to distinguish between pastoral care and pastoral counseling.

Teaching and Christian Education (*year three*)

This course considers various aspects of Christian Education materials: the strengths and weaknesses of curricula available, types of classes, adapting curricula to a group, and small groups (formation and dynamics). It will also help participants become familiar with their Presbytery Resource Center.

Liturgical Celebrations (*optional course, year three*)

This is a hands-on course that will deal with the practical elements of administering the Lord's Supper in worship and home communions; celebrating baptism; preparation for and conducting of weddings; and planning and officiating at funerals.

In addition to the completion of these mandated courses, it is expected that those who wish to be considered for commissioning, as well as those who have been commissioned will participate in yearly continuing education, even if they are not currently commissioned.

ALTERNATIVE OR SUPPLEMENTAL ROUTES Through the PROGRAM:

The Presbytery of Northern Waters commissioned lay pastor program will normally take three years to complete. If participants wish to complete the program more quickly they may supplement the Presbytery's offerings with approved offerings elsewhere (with the approval of the LPTW committee). We encourage participants to consider taking advantage of offerings available through neighboring Presbyteries and the University Of Dubuque Theology School's online program, as well as Synod School. This may be done either as a supplement to courses offered by the Presbytery of Northern Waters or as an alternative.

Regardless of how or where the coursework is completed, anyone who wants to be considered for commissioning or for inclusion on the supply preacher list must apply for admission to the Presbytery of Northern Waters program and complete its requirements.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Relationship to the LPTW committee:** a consistent relationship is required. This includes at least an entrance interview, a final interview, and regular communication as appropriate.
2. **Advisors:** each participant will be assigned an advisor during the training process, in consultation with the participant. Advisors and participants will meet regularly in person and/or by phone. The role of advisors is to provide an objective listening ear; to act as a source of information and encouragement; to provide vocation and spiritual nurture; and to function as part of the training team.
3. **Psychological exam:** every participant will undergo standard psychological testing and interpretation of the results before being considered for commissioning.
4. **Sexual misconduct policy workshop and background check:** those wishing to pursue commissioning must participate in a PNW sexual misconduct policy workshop, and also agree to a background check.
5. **Final course evaluations:** each course will include final evaluation requirements (test, paper or other). All who desire to be commissioned must also meet with the LPTW in order for the committee to evaluate the person's ability to relate their studies to the various aspects of congregational ministry.

6. **A second statement of faith** and interview with the committee will be required in order for the person to demonstrate how their studies have influenced their faith.
7. **Regular attendance at Presbytery meetings** is strongly encouraged.

THE PROCESS OF COMMISSIONING:

1. One must have a call to a congregation in order to be commissioned.
2. The recommendation of the LPTW committee is also necessary for commissioning.
3. The COM has responsibility for pairing lay pastors and prospective congregations.
4. When a lay pastor has been called to serve a congregation, a commissioning service will take place at a presbytery meeting.
5. The first commissioning shall be for no more than one year. Following a positive review and evaluation the commission may be extended in three-year increments. The commission may also be revoked at any time by the presbytery.
6. Commissioning allows a lay pastor to administer the sacraments and perform weddings only in the congregation to which they have been called.