



Presbytery of the James

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Welcome Commissioned Ruling Elder!

Our community of churches is honored and blessed to have you answering God's call in this way. The POJ is here to support you as you continue in ministry.

WHO WE ARE	1
Our Presbytery	1
Our Structure	1
The WHAT and HOW of it	2
Commissioned Pastors	2
Steps to Take	3
Checklist and COP/COM Meeting Times	5
Information Appendices	6
Appendix A, Pathways to Learning and Leadership	6
Completion of Coursework	8
Appendix B, Application Form	9
Appendix C, Session Endorsement	12
Appendix D, Psychological Evaluation	14
Appendix E, Maintaining Healthy Boundaries	15
Appendix F, Readiness to Be Examined for Commissioning	16
The WHAT and HOW of it	18
Appendix G, Guidelines for a Statement of Faith	18
Appendix H, Service of Commissioning	19
Appendix I, Commissioned Ruling Elder's Annual Report	Due Feb 15th 22
Appendix J, Mentor's Annual Report	Due Feb 15th 24
Appendix K, Session's or Supervisor's Annual Report	Due Feb 15th 26
Appendix L, Commissioned Pastor Covenant Agreement	27
Appendix M, 2022 Minimum Compensation Criteria	30
Appendix N, Request to Commission a Commissioned Ruling Elder	33

WHO WE ARE

Our Presbytery

Presbytery of the James was created in 1989 to serve churches in central Virginia. The presbytery is responsible for the government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. Over one hundred congregations and worshipping communities are included under the umbrella of Presbytery of the James.

Our Structure

The Commission On Ministry (COM) is the “parent” of the Commissioned Ruling Elder’s sub-committee (COR). This team carries out the presbytery's responsibility to receive and dismiss Commissioned Ruling Elders, to supervise the process by which churches secure the service of Commissioned Ruling Elders, and to help resolve difficulties between pastors and churches. This is not a constitutional committee, but strives to maintain excellent relationships and support of all of our Commissioned Ruling Elders across the churches of the POJ. This committee usually meets on the first Wednesday of every month.

Get to know your team! The members of the Committee for Commissioned Ruling Elders are eager to get to know you. Always feel free to reach out and connect.

The WHAT and HOW of it

Commissioned Ruling Elder

From time to time, there are small membership congregations that may not be in a position to extend a call to a minister of the Word and Sacrament. There are validated ministries where a commissioned ruling elder may be of service (for example, but not limited to, chaplains or pastoral assistants in a congregation). It is the intention of this policy to outline the process for authorizing ruling elders to be commissioned to limited pastoral service as provided for in the Book of Order (G-2.10).

In order to be considered for authorization as a commissioned ruling elder (CRE), a candidate must have been elected, examined, and ordained as a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for at least two years unless otherwise approved by the Commissioned Ruling Elder Committee (CREC). This policy is written to utilize Union Presbyterian Seminary's Pathways to Learning and Leadership program, specifically designed to prepare those interested in becoming CPs. Information on the Pathways to Learning and Leadership program may be found at www.upsem.edu/leadership-institute/pathways-overview/. Other approved programs may also be considered.

Once a commissioned ruling elder is commissioned to their limited pastoral service, they shall have an agreement (see Appendix L) that specifies the term of service, which shall not exceed 12 months but may be renewed. As a commissioned ruling elder, they are permitted to moderate the session, to administer the Sacraments, to officiate at marriages within the congregation to which they have been commissioned per the Book of Order G-2.1001. A commissioned ruling elder is permitted to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when authorized by the Commissioned Ruling Elder Committee and when invited by the session, in a church in which they are not commissioned to serve.

Steps to Take

Those interested in becoming CREs are encouraged to engage in the following steps:

1. **Arrange a meeting** with the CREC, a subcommittee of the Commission on Ministry (COM) to discuss their interest in serving as a CRE and to review the requirements and expectations of the Presbytery of the James (POJ).
2. **Take Introductory and Phase One courses** through *Pathways to Learning and Leadership* program (or another approved program) (See following Appendix A).
3. **Before Year Two:**
 - a. Work with the CREC to select a mentor, who must be a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the POJ.
 - b. Complete Application Form (Appendix B), which includes session endorsement (Appendix C) and at least three references.
 - c. Work with the CREC to undertake a psychological evaluation to determine fitness for ministry as a CRE (must be completed before the end of Phase Two course work) (Appendix D).
 - d. Have an interview with the CREC to approve advancing to Phase Two courses.
4. Take Phase Two courses through Union Presbyterian Seminary (or another approved program).
5. Complete the “Maintaining Boundaries in a Digital Age” or a similar course addressing the issue of sexual harassment or abuse. The COM’s Administration & Pastoral Care Subcommittee will have suggestions.
6. **Readiness for Accepting a Commission:**
 - a. Prepare a Statement of Faith (Appendix F) and answer two ordination vow questions.
 - b. Be examined by the CREC to determine readiness for accepting a commission. The examination shall include the preaching of a sermon for the COM. Guests of the CRE candidate are welcome to be present.
 - c. Be added to the Pulpit Supply List and become available for potential match with a congregation(s) or ministry.

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- d. Upon recommendation of the CREC, have Commissioned Ruling Elder Covenant Agreement (Appendix K) approved by the COM's Transitional Relations Subcommittee.
 - e. Be commissioned to pastoral service by the POJ with scope of specific duties included in the Covenant Agreement.

7. Following Commissioning:

- a. Engage in continuing education opportunities annually, as required by the POJ. (this includes the Maintaining Healthy Boundaries training, required for all minister members of the POJ).
- b. Have an annual review by the session of the church you are serving and by your mentor or have an annual review by the supervisor of the ministry you are serving and forward a copy to the CREC.
- c. Submit renewal of Commissioned Ruling Elder Covenant Agreement or ministry contract (if not serving in a congregation) each year to the COM (commissions may be granted for three years and may be renewed; Covenant Agreements must be renewed annually).

Checklist and CREC/COM Meeting Times

- Initial Meeting / CREC Liaison Connection
- Application Form / Endorsement
- Ministry Mentor
- Phase One Classes; Pathways to Learning and Leadership (or similar)
- Second Meeting / Moving to Phase 2 Classes
- Phase Two Classes; Pathways to Learning and Leadership
 - Coursework completion certificate
- Psychological Evaluation (Appendix D)
- Maintaining Boundaries Training
- Statement of Faith (Appendix F)
- Q and A Ordination Questions Examen (1 page, Appendix E)
- CREC Readiness Exam

CREC Meetings take place at **1:30 p.m.** on the **first Wednesday of each month**. The COM meeting takes place at **10:30 a.m.** on the **second Thursday of each month**.

Stated meetings of the POJ are listed on the landing page of the [POJ website](#).

Information Appendices

Appendix A, Pathways to Learning and Leadership

Go to <https://www.upsem.edu/leadership-institute/pathways-overview/> for current information about the program and/or to register.

What is it? *Pathways to Learning and Leadership* is a program of online courses offered for church members who want to increase their knowledge and discipleship. Each course is five weeks long.

Foundational courses (Phase I) are taught entirely online, using live instruction, readings, and peer discussion.

Practical Ministry courses (Phase II) for church members and those preparing to be CREs are taught online, with some practical exercises carried out in cooperation with the local presbytery.

Electives for church members and for CREs who want continuing education are taught entirely online. Church members may receive a certificate of completion after successfully completing six courses; the CRE course requirements are directed by the presbytery.

How much time will it take? Participants will need about *six (6) hours per week* per course, including two hours at a specific time online, to complete the work.

Who is it for? People interested in learning more about the church and interacting with seminary professors and top leaders. Pathways can be a way to supplement the adult education offered in your congregation. People preparing to be CREs will join interested church members in learning together. Courses will be taught from a Reformed (Presbyterian) perspective but are open to all.

Who will teach the courses? Most will be taught by faculty from Union Presbyterian Seminary. Some will be taught by practitioners in their field.

How much does it cost? The cost per five-week course in 2021 is \$125. A \$25 late fee will be added if registration is received less than two weeks before the course begins. In addition, there will usually be one book to purchase per course.

Are there prerequisites to taking the courses? No. Anyone can participate.

Will I earn college credit for the courses? No. These courses do not earn academic credit. At the end of the two years, you will meet the educational requirements of your denomination toward becoming a CRE (or your denomination's equivalent).

When can I get started? Courses will be ongoing. We recommend that the foundational courses (Phase I) be taken first, but other courses may be taken in any order.

What kind of computer do I need? You will need a desktop or laptop computer, or a tablet or smartphone in order to participate. You must have a microphone and a webcam, either built-in or external/USB.

How do I register? Go to <https://www.upsem.edu/leadership-institute/pathways-overview/> to register online.

Two Programs of Study for CRE education: In order to meet the educational requirements of the POJ or other mid-council, students must take all five courses in Phase I and all five courses in Phase II, a total of ten courses.

For a **Certificate of Completion** for church members, they must take all five courses in Phase I, plus two additional courses in Phase II for a total of six courses.

Others interested in education for discipleship are welcome in any/all of the courses offered.

---Phase I and Phase II Course Descriptions---

Phase I – Foundations (year 1) – required for both programs. This phase is open to anyone, CRE students and those seeking a certificate as well as church members who just want to take a class or two but are not seeking a certificate of completion. These five courses are foundational for both the CP and Lay Education programs and required for both to successfully complete the course. Courses are taught completely online, with real-time contact with the instructor, interaction with other students online, and independent work. Each class includes 10 hours of instruction, 10 hours of peer interaction, and approximately 10 hours of reading/writing/other assignments.

In 2024, the tuition for each five-week course is \$165 or a *total of \$825 for Phase I*, and students will purchase (or borrow from a library) one or two books for each course. Instructors will report whether or not each student did the required work but will not assign a grade or write an assessment. Presbyteries or other mid-councils may do some sort of assessment if they wish, to make sure the student gained the knowledge and content desired.

For the CRE program, it is required that a mentor be assigned by the POJ or mid-council, who may wish to take the courses along with the CRE student. This will help the POJ to assess student's work and their fitness for CRE work. Mentors may also monitor the peer interaction assignments, perhaps on a rotating basis, for each week of the course.

All courses include practical reflection and application (case studies, projects, etc.) in relation to academic content. The five courses in Phase I are:

1. Biblical Interpretation

-
2. Church History
 3. Reformed Theology
 4. The Christian Life
 5. Mission & Evangelism

After taking these courses, the POJ's CREC consults with the CRE students to see if they are interested in continuing the process toward becoming a CRE. They would then take the next five courses. Because the courses in Phase I are foundational, they must be taken before Phase II courses.

At the end of each course, students completing the assignments will receive 3.0 CEUs (12.0 for all of the courses in Phase I).

Phase II – A Deeper Look (year 2)

In this phase, a hybrid format will be used. This will be accomplished in one of two ways.

Ordinarily, students will complete *18 hours of work online* with peers and independently, and *12 hours (two full days) on the campus* of Union Presbyterian Seminary, with some of the in-class courses on the Richmond campus and some on the Charlotte campus, where students can practice what they have learned. In special cases where travel and time to the seminary are prohibitive and where a presbytery mentor is available, the face-to-face time may be accomplished meeting with the mentor, who will work closely with the seminary in planning those meetings.

In 2024, the tuition for each class is *\$165* (which includes two lunches and refreshments), or a *total of \$825 for Phase II-a*. Instructors will affirm that a student completed all assignments and was present for online and in-class learning. The CREC takes care of assessing the readiness of the student to move on to being commissioned as a CRE.

Classes in Phase II-a are:

1. Polity and Administration I
2. Teaching the Bible
3. Preaching
4. Pastoral Care
5. Worship & Sacraments

At the end of each course, students completing the assignments will receive 3.0 CEUs (15.0 for all of the courses in Phase II).

Self-Directed – Bible Surveys

Pre-recorded lectures, self-paced courses:

1. New Testament Bible Survey
2. Old Testament Bible Survey

Completion of Coursework

The CRE Committee will need to retain a copy of your certificate of completion from Union Presbyterian Seminary completion of the course work in the Pathways to Leadership program or similar evidence from other seminaries where the coursework is done.

Appendix B, Application Form

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: Home _____ Cell _____

Email: _____

Church Membership: _____ Date: _____

Please answer the following (using another sheet of paper):

1. Describe your activities in the life and mission of the Church

(List churches to which you have belonged; dates of active membership; church activities you participated in; positions of responsibility you have held, etc.)

2. Describe your service and experience as an ordained ruling elder

3. Describe your community activities

(List organizations to which you have belonged; dates of active membership; activities you participated in; positions of responsibility you have held, etc.)

Employment:

(List all significant jobs you have held; dates of active employment; job or duty, and specifically, positions of responsibility you have held, etc.)

Educational Background:

School/Location/Year Graduated/Diploma/Degree: *(start with High School)*

References:

List the name, address, telephone, email, and occupation of three people (no relatives) who have known you for at least five years. One of these references should be a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1.

2.

3.

I hereby authorize those inquiring into my suitability to contact my references:

_____ (signature)

Statement:

“Why I would like to be involved in the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program?”

In your statement, please describe which phases of service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder you believe will be most difficult for you and which will be easiest for you. Also, please describe your most meaningful religious experience and why it was most meaningful to you.

Appendix C, Session Endorsement

NOTE: You should take this completed form, together with your “Statement” (previous page) to the moderator of your session. The minister and session will talk with you about your interest in the Commissioned Ruling Elder program. The clerk of session will then forward your application form and statement to the Presbytery’s Commissioned Ruling Elder Committee, c/o Presbytery of the James, 3218 Chamberlayne Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227 OR scan and send to office@presbyteryofthejames.org.

Recommendation of the Session

As the session considers recommending a person to be enrolled in the Commissioned Ruling Elder program, the following are among the criteria that should be considered:

- Is the person a committed Christian? ___ Yes ___ No

Comments:

- Is the person an active and effective member of your congregation?
___ Yes ___ No

Comments:

- Does the person relate helpfully and positively to others? ___ Yes ___ No

Comments:

- Is the person loyal to and enthusiastic about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
___ Yes ___ No

Comments:

- Does the person have strong leadership qualities? ___ Yes ___ No

Comments:

-
- Does the person have good communication skills? ___ Yes ___ No

Comments:

Also, in considering your recommendation, are the session and the congregation willing to affirm and support this person in ministry? ___ Yes ___ No

Comments: _____

RECOMMENDATION

The Session of _____ (Church)
in _____, Virginia has met with
_____, who is a ruling elder in this
congregation and, after due deliberation, recommends this person for the Commissioned
Ruling Elder program and pledges its affirmation and support as this person embarks
upon and continues in this ministry.

Signed: _____
Clerk of Session Date

Appendix D, Psychological Evaluation

As part of the evaluation of candidates who are seeking to become Commissioned Ruling Elder, the Presbytery of the James requires a basic psychological evaluation to be done before completion of the Phase Two course work. This evaluation must take place before the candidate can be considered for commissioning as a Commissioned Ruling Elder. Should any fee cause a hardship for the CRE candidate or the home church, please contact com@presbyteryofthejames.org.

Approved Providers

The following providers have agreed to perform a basic evaluation and submit a confidential report to the stated clerk of the POJ for a fee. The POJ will cover a third of the cost not to exceed \$300.

LeaderWise

516 Mission House Ln,
New Brighton, MN 55112

Online at: <https://www.leaderwise.org/>

This will include three inventories that will be filled out before the meeting and a two-hour meeting (over zoom) to talk with one of their psychologists.

- Fee: \$908 in 2023

Virginia Institute of Pastoral Care

2000 Bremono Road, Suite 105
Richmond, VA 23226
804-282-8332

- Fee: \$450 in 2021

Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia

Lewinsville Presbyterian Church
1716 Chain Bridge Road
McLean, VA 22101
703-903-9696 ext. 290
Email: info@pastoralcounseling.com

- Fee: \$1,500
- The following CPC counselors provide clergy assessments:
- Carey Gauzens, LCSW, CP
Erin Swenson-Reinhold
Randall Prior, DMIN, AAPC FELLOW

Other providers may be used upon pre-approval of the CREC.

Fees covered by the Commission on Ministry will have to be requested by the CRE Committee on behalf of the candidate. Forms are found [here](#) (printable) or [here](#) (online). A copy of the exam upon completion should be sent to the CRE Committee moderator.

Appendix E, Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Maintaining Boundaries in a Digital Age is an online course offered by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary. It explores issues of clergy ethics in an era of instantaneous, electronic communication. It helps spiritual leaders stay healthy and attentive to appropriate boundaries in the midst of new challenges. It builds on the first course in the Keeping Our Sacred Trust series, Understanding Clergy Sexual Ethics, which is a primer on preventing clergy sexual misconduct. The cost is \$49 per person, and if needed an application for coverage can be made to the POJ.

This course is **required** for all those doing professional ministry within the bounds of the Presbytery of the James.

The course is comprised of written and video content that you will need to read and reflect on. To complete the course, you must submit responses to a series of reflection questions. The Lewis Center will evaluate your responses on a pass/fail basis before issuing a certificate of completion.

The amount of time required to complete the course varies from person to person, but you should expect to spend a minimum of 4 to 6 hours. However, it need not be done in one sitting.

Maintaining Boundaries in a Digital Age is presented in three parts:

- Part I focuses on the importance of boundaries and how to maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Part II examines some of the challenges of ministry in an electronic age.
- Part III considers sexual ethics in the digital age.

An online information sheet in pdf format can be found [here](#).

Enrolment into the course if done [here](#).

Appendix F, Readiness to Be Examined for Commissioning

Once a CRE candidate has completed the required course work, there are a series of steps required to be recognized as a ruling elder ready to be commissioned to particular pastoral service as defined in the *Book of Order* G-2.1002.

These steps include:

1. Completing a one-page **Statement of Faith** using “Guidelines for a Statement of Faith in the Presbytery of the James” (Appendix F)
2. Completing a one-page paper with answers to the constitutional **Ordination Questions** asked of all teaching and ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (see instructions below).

Ordination Questions

Please select two of the eight following constitutional questions and write a half-page response to each question (total = one page). Use the question’s bullet points as a guide to your answer. It is not necessary to answer each bullet point.

1. *Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?*
 - What does it mean to you to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior?
 - What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ is Lord of all? Head of the Church?
 - What does it mean to you to say that God is one yet made up of three persons?
 - What is the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
2. *Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s Word to you?*
 - What role does the Holy Spirit play in your interpretation of the Scriptures?
 - In what way are the Scriptures the “unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ”?
 - How are the Scriptures “God’s Word to you”?
3. *Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?*
 - List some of what you understand to be the “essential tenets” of the Reformed faith.
 - Do you find any of them in conflict with what you think that “Scripture leads us to believe and do”?

-
4. *Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?*
 - What does it mean to you to be obedient to Jesus Christ?
 - What does it mean to you to be under the authority of Scripture?
 - What does it mean to you to be guided by our confessions?

 5. *Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?*
 - What does it mean to you "to be guided by our church's polity"?
 - What does it mean to you "to abide by our church's discipline"?
 - What does it mean to you "to be a friend among your colleagues in ministry"?

 6. *Will you in our own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?*
 - What is the hardest part of keeping this vow for you?

 7. *Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?*
 - What is your role as a commissioned pastor to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church? Is that role different from that of any other member of the church?
 - What do you do when these three (peace, unity, and purity) are in tension?

 8. *Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*
 - What does it mean to you to "serve the people"?
 - How might we expect to see "energy, intelligence, imagination, and love" in your ministry as a commissioned pastor?

Since all Commissioned Ruling Elders answer this specific question, on a separate sheet, please share a paragraph or two about what it means to you to answer this question in the affirmative:

Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

The WHAT and HOW of it

Appendix G, Guidelines for a Statement of Faith

A Statement of Faith in the Presbytery of the James¹:

1. Shall be *a personal statement* of how you understand and appropriate the faith of the church, especially the church within the Reformed Tradition. The statement is not meant to be a theological encyclopedia, a recitation of doctrinal statements, or an individualistic impression of belief, but a statement of *your personal understanding of the Christian Faith in the Reformed Tradition and how this affects you*,
2. Is written in a way that is *neither excessively technical or overly colloquial* but seeks to speak to an audience of teaching elders and informed ruling elders.
3. Will *engage the following topics*, showing an understanding and appreciation of the topic in Christian belief and implications for the church's life:
 - a. God – Trinity
 - b. Jesus Christ
 - c. Holy Spirit
 - d. human nature and sin
 - e. grace
 - f. the Sacraments
 - g. the doctrine of the church
 - h. Scripture
 - i. the mission of the churchOther topics may be included as space allows.
4. Must express a theological view compatible with the confessional statements of the Church expressed within the *Book of Confessions*.
5. Is *one page in length* (no less than 11 pt. font and one-inch margins). Given these constraints, succinctness and brevity are valued.
6. Must be *submitted electronically* as a Word document.
7. Shall *exclude excessive formatting and artwork*, although artwork may be submitted as a supporting document.
8. Will *exclude footnotes, supplementary comments, external references, quotations, citations*, and the like and be limited to the person's own words in their own style.

¹ Updated: April 2020

Appendix H, Service of Commissioning

QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMISSIONED CANDIDATE

Member of Commissioned Ruling Elder Committee: We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

The Presbytery of the James is satisfied that [*name of CP candidate*] has received preparation and instruction for pastoral service as determined by this presbytery. In accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), we now commission [*name of candidate*] to pastoral service as a Commissioned Pastor.

[*name of candidate*], do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do you?

CRE being commissioned: I do.

Moderator: Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you? Do you?

CRE being commissioned: I do.

Moderator: Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God? Do you and will you?

CRE being commissioned: I do and I will.

Moderator: Will you fulfill your commission in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions? Will you?

CRE being commissioned: I will.

Moderator: Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit? Will you?

CRE being commissioned: I will.

Moderator: Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world? Will you?

CRE being commissioned: I will.

Moderator: Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church? Do you?

CRE being commissioned: I do.

Moderator: Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love? Will you?

CRE being commissioned: I will.

Moderator: Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming good news, teaching faith, and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ? Will you?

CRE being commissioned: I will with God's help.

Moderator: Let us pray. God of grace, in baptism you have called us to a common ministry as ambassadors of Christ, trusting us with the message of reconciliation. Give us courage and discipline to follow where your servants rightly lead us, that together we may declare your wonderful deeds and show your love to the world. We ask your special blessing this day for [*name of candidate*] that his/her/their gifts for ministry and his/her/their call to serve may be blessed by your presence and bathed in your love. Through Jesus Christ, the Lord of all. Amen.

[*name of candidate*], on behalf of the Presbytery of the James I welcome to this ministry Charles who is now the Commissioned Pastor for the Brandermill Church. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him. Thanks be to God!
Congratulations [*name of candidate*]!

STATEMENT FROM THE COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER BEING COMMISSIONED

Here the newly commissioned ruling elder may share a statement of faith, a testimony or other reflection on their commissioning and the service to which God has called them.

CHARGE TO THE NEWLY COMMISSIONED *[suggested]*

The newly commissioned ruling elder stands to receive the charge.

The following, or other appropriate scripture may be used. [John 21:15-18]

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

CHARGE TO THOSE GATHERED *[suggested]*

Moderator: Will those of you gathered here be faithful in honoring the call of this commissioned ruling elder? Will you encourage their service to the Good News, bear witness to their caring actions and offer loving accountability in the name of Jesus Christ? Will you?

Those who are Gathered respond: With Christ’s help, We will!

Appendix I, Commissioned Ruling Elder's Annual Report Due Feb 15th

Name: _____

Home Church: _____

Church of your *Commissioning*: _____

OR

Ministry of your *Commissioning*: _____

Dates: (from _____ to _____)

Do you wish to continue to serve this congregation / ministry? ___ Yes ___ No

___ I would like someone from the Commissioned Ruling Elder Committee to meet with me and the session to discuss changes in terms of the Commissioned Ruling Elder Covenant Agreement.

Briefly answer the questions listed below.

1. What are your major responsibilities in this congregation/ministry?

2. What are the key ministry strengths you bring to this commission?

3. What are the key accomplishments of this pastoral relationship?

4. What have been some of the challenges in this pastoral relationship?

5. In what areas of ministry could you use additional training and support?

Printed Name of Commissioned Ruling Elder: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix J, Mentor's Annual Report

Due Feb 15th

Commissioned Ruling Elder's Name: _____

Commissioned on _____ by the Presbytery of the James
to serve the _____ (church or agency) for up to
three years, ending on _____.

Mentor / Supervisor Name: _____

Mentor / Supervisor Address: _____

Briefly answer the following questions.

1. From your experience, how would you characterize your relationship with this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

2. What are the major strengths of this Commissioned Ruling Elder's ministry?

3. In what areas of ministry would you encourage this Commissioned Elder to make improvements? What areas of continuing education would you recommend for this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

4. What are measurable goals for the coming year that you have developed with the Commissioned Ruling Elder?

Mentor / Supervisor Printed Name: _____

Mentor / Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Commissioned Ruling Elder's Name: _____

Commissioned to _____ (church) in a
commission that ends or is eligible for renewal on _____.

Briefly answer the following questions:

1. What are the major strengths of this Commissioned Ruling Elder's ministry?

2. In what areas of ministry would you encourage this Commissioned Ruling Elder to make improvements?

3. What areas of continuing education would you recommend for this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

Printed Name of Clerk of Session: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L, Commissioned Pastor Ruling Elder Agreement²

Open this fillable form at <https://presbyteryofthejames.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Commissioned-Ruling-Elder-Covenant-Agreement-Final-2025-1.pdf>

Commissioned Ruling Elder Covenant Agreement Form

Presbytery of the James

Completed by the Session

On this date,		For the		Church, in		, Virginia
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recommends that this be approved for	
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The effective date is:		End date:	
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Check all that apply:	Full-time		Part-time		If part-time, how many hours?	
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Compensation					
Total Annual Cash Equivalent:		\$	Full-time Compensation + Benefits must be at least \$61,200 and prorated for Part-Time		
A. With Housing and Utilities		B. With Manse, No Utilities Provided		C. With Manse & Utilities	
Annual cash salary:	\$	Annual cash salary:	\$	Annual cash salary:	\$
Housing/Util allow:	\$	Manse value:	\$	Manse value:	\$
		Util/furnishing allow:	\$	Utilities are provided:	Yes
Benefits					
D. Self-employment tax (.0765 X total cash equivalent):			\$		
E. Pension & Major Medical dues; see BoP Choice:			\$		
F. Study Leave (2 weeks minimum) <i>Leave shall accrue at the rate of one week per six months of work.</i>					
G. Vacation (4 weeks minimum) <i>Leave shall accrue at the rate of one week per three months of work.</i>					
Professional Reimbursements					
H. Auto/travel expenses (IRS rate)			\$		
I. Study leave expenses (presbytery minimum \$1,000)			\$		
Other (please specify, e.g., compensation, benefits, reimbursement)					
			\$		

Duties	
Duties of a Commissioned Ruling Elder	During the above time period, the Commissioned Ruling Elder and the Session has agreed to the following priorities concerning responsibilities: (Rank 1-4)
A. Worship preparation and leadership	#
B. Pastoral care and visitation (mark all that apply)	#
Hospital visitation	
Visitation of the homebound with communion	
Visitation of prospective members	
General visitation of church members	
Other:	
C. Administration (mark all that apply)	#
Session meetings	
Meetings of Session committees	
Congregational meetings	
Other:	
D. Additional pastoral duties (mark all that apply)	#
Church School	
Vacation Bible School	
Confirmation classes	
Officer training	
Other:	

A Commissioned Ruling Elder may enter into a Covenant Agreement for 12-months, renewable. The Agreement may be renewed annually upon review by the Commissioned Ruling Elder Committee and the Transitional Relations Committee of the Commission on Ministry (COM).

Following three years of service, the commission to the particular church or ministry may be renewed but may not exceed three years without renewal.

The salary of a Commissioned Ruling Elder is to be prorated by the number of hours worked (i.e., 10 hours is 25%; 20 hours is 50%, etc.). Health and pension benefits may be paid by the church if mutually agreeable (minimum 20-hour work week is required in order to pay health and pension benefits). The salary is agreed to by the Session and the Commissioned Ruling Elder. *The church will annually review the adequacy of compensation and follow the presbytery's compensation guidelines.*

Signatures			
Clerk of Session:		Date:	
Commissioned Ruling Elder:		Date:	
COM Approval:		Date:	

Please send this completed document to com@presbyteryofthejames.org.

Appendix M, 2024 Minimum Compensation Criteria

I. THE PRINCIPLES FOR COMPENSATION FOR COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- A. Scripture, in several places, affirms that those who labor for the Gospel “deserve their wages” (*Luke 10:4-7; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 1 Timothy 5:17*).
- B. A commissioned ruling elder is a skilled person with great responsibility who studied and trained to fulfill their calling, as required by the commissioned ruling elder committee.
- C. Principles of justice and fairness are to be honored and emphasized. The compensation should appear reasonable, just, and fair to the leaders of the session, to the commissioned ruling elder, and the commissioned ruling elder committee.
- D. Remuneration for services rendered by the commissioned ruling elder should be in line with the income levels of the area in which their ministry takes place.
- E. Minimum compensation is established as a way of defining the minimum value of a full-time call, requiring no more than entry-level skills of a newly commissioned ruling elder. Additional skills, education, experience, responsibilities, etc., should be used to factor in additional compensation.
- F. For the peace, unity, and effectiveness of the church, general acceptance of this principle is recommended as the commissioned ruling elder works to fulfill the mission of the church (as defined in *The Great Ends of the Church (Book of Order 2019-2021 F-1.0304)*).

II. THE MINIMUM REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A COMMISSION ARE:

A. Compensation

- 1. Cash Salary
- 2. Housing

Of the minimum salary, a portion may be designated as housing allowance. The housing allowance may include mortgage payments, rent, utility costs, and furnishings. For tax purposes there

must be receipts or proof of expense.

B. Benefits

1. Vacation
2. Study Leave

3. Family Leave

C. Professional Reimbursements

1. Auto/travel Expenses
2. Continuing Education and Book Expenses

2024 MINIMUM REQUIRED AMOUNTS OF A COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER

The minimum full-time compensation for 2023 was not specified.

A. Compensation

1. Cash Salary
2. Housing

Subtotal **\$44,200**

B. Benefits

1. Vacation, four weeks
2. Study Leave, two weeks
3. Family Medical Leave, twelve weeks*

Total Compensation and Benefits **\$44,200**

C. Professional Reimbursements

1. Auto/travel Expenses (at IRS rate)
2. Continuing Education and Book Expenses

\$1,000

2024 TERMS OF A COMMISSION WORKSHEET FOR CHURCHES WITH FULL-TIME COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS

A. Compensation

- 1. Cash Salary \$ _____
- 2. Housing \$ _____
- Subtotal (2024 Minimum: \$44,200)** \$ _____

B. Benefits

- 2. Fifty percent of Self-Employment Tax (SECA), *7.65% of Subtotal* \$ _____
- 3. Vacation (four weeks minimum) _____
- 4. Study Leave (two weeks minimum) _____
- Total Compensation and Benefits** \$ _____

C. Professional Reimbursements

- 1. Auto/travel Expenses (at IRS rate) \$ _____
- 2. Continuing Education and Book Expenses (\$1,000 minimum) \$ _____
- Total** \$ _____

Appendix N, ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION COMMISSION GUIDELINES

Revised April 2024

BACKGROUND: The Service of Commissioning is a crucial part of the process towards the candidate's installation to the position to which they have been called. Please remember that through this commission, the presbytery directs the process, in consultation with the candidate and the calling entity. It is the duty of the presbytery (G-2.1003 and W-4.0404) to commission a commissioned ruling elder. However, it is impractical for the presbytery to meet each time a person is commissioned. The commission, therefore, acts on behalf of the presbytery in commissioning a commissioned ruling elder.

We are a diverse presbytery. We have members of many origins, nationalities, ethnicities, and languages. It is important to have the presbytery represented in its richness and variety within the commission.

REQUIREMENTS for the Commission: The Commission on Ministry (COM) liaison, who worked with the session and commissioned ruling elder will be able to assist the candidate in developing the commission. The candidate should feel free to call upon the COM liaison, vice moderator of COM and/or the stated clerk of the presbytery for assistance.

The "Request to Commission" form (attached) will need to be completed and submitted for approval to the COM's Examinations Committee one week prior to the first Thursday of the month. COM has authority to approve all Commissions. Please ensure that a copy of your request is at the presbytery office in time for consideration.

"Membership of the Commission: 5 persons (two teaching elders, two ruling elders, and one commissioned ruling elder) will compose the commission. These persons are to be members of the Presbytery of the James and shall include the moderator of the presbytery (or designated former moderator) who shall preside and ask the constitutional questions (*Book of Order* W-4.0404). The ruling elders are to represent three different congregations and the ministers are to be representatives from two congregations and/or ministries. The commission should exemplify the geographical diversity of the presbytery. It also should be gender equal and ethnically diverse. Ordinarily no more than three persons should serve as guests of the commission."

The stated clerk will need addresses of persons who are not members of the presbytery in order to invite them to serve with the commission after COM approval. Immediate former teaching

elders of the church or validated ministry to which a candidate is being installed are NOT TO BE asked to participate. This includes temporary teaching elders.

Time, location, and day for the service: The presbytery shall appoint a time and place for the service. Prior to submitting the “Request to Commission,” the presbytery shall obtain permission from the church session to hold the service. The service may be held at a regular worship hour of the congregation, but it is highly encouraged and recommended to hold this service on Sunday afternoons (3:00 or 4:00 p.m.). Holding this service outside of Sunday morning worship better enables participation of presbytery members.

Order of Service: There is not a mandated order of service for ordinations and/or installations. However, the following parts of worship shall be included.

- † A person to preside and ask the constitutional questions of the candidate
- † A sermon to be preached
- + Constitutional questions to the congregation
- † A charge to the commissioned ruling elder
- † A charge to the congregation

(On the last page of this document, several examples of the Ordination/Installation portion may be found. Consult W-4.4001, 4.4003, 4.4005)

The worship service should be consonant with the Directory for Worship Service for the Lord’s Day.

The candidate may indicate the vestments for the clergy in the “Request to Commission” form (red for the Holy Spirit or the Liturgical season color is appropriate).

Offering: Since the commissioning service is a service of the presbytery, an offering shall be taken and designated for the Pastoral Care Fund of the presbytery (which assists ministers, educators, and families in difficult financial times).

Receptions: Receptions are optional and should be arranged by the local congregation.

Minutes of the Commission: Following the Commissioning Service, the “Minutes of the Commission” (attached) should be completed by the moderator and/or the clerk of the commission and filed with the stated clerk in the presbytery office. Upon receiving the minutes, the stated clerk will send to the commissioned ruling elder a certificate of commissioning and an official presbytery letter that can serve as proof of your commissioning.

Honoraria and Travel Expenses: Generally, there are no honoraria given to participants in services of commissioning. The presbytery will pay travel expense for those persons traveling within the geographical boundaries of the presbytery. Those traveling from outside the geographical

boundaries of the presbytery should have travel expenses arranged by the person being commissioned.

Ecumenical Guests: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion with the Reformed Church of America, the United Church of Christ, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. To witness to our ecumenical commitments, it is appropriate to invite persons from any of these denominations to serve as guests of the commission. They may be asked to take some part in worship leadership.

Service of Commissioning Order (W-4.0404)

Statement of Purpose.....	Moderator of Commission
Constitutional Questions to the Candidate.....	Member of Commission
Constitutional Questions to the Congregation	Must be a Ruling Elder
Prayer of Commissioning (Candidate remains standing).....	Member of Commission
Declaration of Commissioning.....	Moderator of Commission
Welcome.....	Commission
Charge to the Commissioned Ruling Elder.....	Member of Commission
Charge to the Congregation.....	Member of Commission
Brief statement.....	Commissioned Ruling Elder
Benediction.....	Commissioned Ruling Elder

The Presbytery of the James
Request to Commission a Commissioned Ruling Elder

Request is made that presbytery appoint a <u>commission</u> according to G-2.1003:				
<i>Name of person to be commissioned</i>				
<i>Name of church or organization the person will serve</i>				
<i>Date and time of the commissioning service</i>	Date		Time	
<i>Name of the church or other place where the service will happen</i>	Name		City/County	

Members of the Commission (required)		
<i>Before completing this form, please read the "Ordination and Installation Commission Guidelines." The commission must include the presbytery's current moderator (or vice moderator), who will preside and put the constitutional questions to the commissioned ruling elder. The commission should exhibit gender, ethnic, and geographic diversity.</i>		
Name	Church/Organization	Email
<i>At least two minister members of the Presbytery of the James, representing two different churches or ministries.</i>		

At least two ruling elders from two different congregations in the Presbytery of the James.

At least one commissioned ruling elder from another congregation in the Presbytery of the James.

Guests of the Commission (optional)

Ordinarily no more than three persons should serve as guests of the commission.

Name	Presbytery/Denomination/Organization	Email

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Assignments

Enter the names of persons listed above who will have the specified functions.

Name of Person	Required Tasks	Name of Person	Other Tasks (optional)
	<i>Moderate, preside, put the constitutional questions</i>		
	<i>Preach the sermon</i>		
	<i>Charge the CRE</i>		
	<i>Charge to the congregation.</i>		

Other Requests (optional)

<i>Celebration of the Lord's Supper?</i>		<i>Preferred vestments for those who lead the service?</i>	
<i>Other?</i>			

NOTE: This form should be completed by the person to be commissioned in consultation with the session(s) involved and sent to the stated clerk of the Presbytery of the James before the first Thursday of the month. Persons designated should have been consulted about their availability to serve with this commissi