

You're thinking about applying for the Commissioned Pastor Candidate program. Commissioned pastors serve the Body of Christ in a wide variety of positions within the NW Coast Presbytery. This exploratory questionnaire may help you discern a call to a Commissioned Pastor (CP) position. It's not scientific, it's designed to help you think about the process as well as pay attention to the call you think God might be issuing.

Blessings to you as you complete this questionnaire and may God lead and direct your discernment process.

Agree Neutral Disagree

1. What brought you to thinking about being a Commissioned Pastor?

- I feel like God is calling me to this ministry.
- It's something I've thought about a lot.
- My pastor has encouraged me.
- Others have encouraged me.

2. I am ready to go deeper into the life God has called me to live.

3. I have time to and the interest in working with a mentor to identify those skills which are basic to pastoral leadership.

4. I want to take those skills to a higher level of competence.

5. I am ready to be mentored. (This is critical as the *Book of Order* requires all CPs to be mentored throughout their service.) It requires an open heart and a willingness to schedule regular meetings.)

6. There are 11 essential skills identified as key to the success of a pastor:

- Bible knowledge
- Pastoral Care
- Leadership
- Worship
- Teaching
- Preaching
- Reformed Theology and Administration of the Sacraments
- Polity
- Missional Thinking
- Administration
- Character and Call

Are You Ready to Be a Commissioned Pastor?

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See the attached definitions.

Thinking about the 11 essential skills listed and your own skills, with which of these do you feel you have experience?

With which do you have some experience?

Which present the greatest challenge?

7. Take each area in which you feel well prepared and document the experiences which support your feeling of preparedness. Attach as many pages as necessary to document these experiences clearly.

Definitions: Essential Skills for Commissioning as Pastor

COM; revised 5/2021

Further information can be found on the “Sample Study Program Outline” provided by NW Coast Presbytery.

Bible Knowledge

“Strong preparation in the reading and interpreting the Word of God is critical for the leading of a congregation.” (Book of Order) The candidate must understand the importance of how to read and interpret the whole Bible with integrity as well as the ability to utilize study tools such as software and commentaries, dictionaries etc. to assist in personal study and preparation for preaching and teaching.

Pastoral Care

Because “all Christians are called to care for one another in daily living, sharing joys and sorrows, supporting in times of stress and need, offering mutual forgiveness and reconciliation” (Book of Order), the candidate must demonstrate the willingness and capability to provide pastoral support and encouragement. Training in counseling as well as a willingness to refer the people if needed must be demonstrated. Additionally, the candidate must be able to recognize his/her own pre-judgments and work diligently to provide counseling from a position of humility and grace.

Leadership

A good leader possesses many different kinds of skills: Listening skills, a humble attitude of service as well as a determination to encourage those she/he is leading. Leaders demonstrate wisdom and have a history of others seeking out their opinions.

Worship

The *Book of Order* reminds those seeking pastoral commissioning that leading worship is critical as the ministries of the congregation flow out of strong proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. Worship is the totality of what is done when the Body is gathered and is not limited to one element. The elements of worship include prayer, reading of Scripture, preaching and music and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The candidate should demonstrate the ability to plan and lead worship for a congregation.

Teaching

A teacher should prayerfully consider the spiritual needs of the congregation and plan and provide for their spiritual growth. Well-crafted sermons, helping to choose small group study subjects and materials, and the recruitment and encouragement of those called to teach within the congregation should be priorities for the candidate. Experience in teaching/co-teaching as well as a commitment to life-long learning is imperative.

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Preaching

“The preached Word or sermon is to be based upon the written Word. Preaching requires diligence and discernment in the study of Scripture, the discipline of daily prayer, cultivated sensitivity to events and issues affecting the lives of the people, and a consistent and personal obedience to Jesus Christ.” (Book of Order) Additionally the BoO goes on to say, “The sermon should present the gospel with simplicity and clarity, in language which can be understood by the people. The candidate should be able to write a sermon that provides for the spiritual growth of the congregation following prayerful study as well as the tools discussed above.

Reformed Theology and Sacraments

Reformed theology, as a stream of the Christian faith, presents with a strong view of the sovereignty of God out of which comes a distinctive view of how to practice the faith. The name Presbyterian comes from references to our governance and we are ruled by a *Book of Order* and our Confessions. A candidate should be able to teach a basic understanding of these distinctives as well as how we view the Sacraments and how they influence our interpretation of Scripture.

Presbyterian Polity

A candidate for Commissioned Pastor must be an ordained Ruling Elder having served as a member of the Session. He/she should be able to teach basic information about the role of Session members, able to moderate the Session and be able to respond to the ordination questions in the affirmative. (See the *Book of Order* for the questions.) Additionally, the candidate should be able to utilize the Books of Order and Confessions in the leadership of the church, faithfully adhering to the tenants of the Reformed tradition.

Missional Thinking

“The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God’s mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and call all people to discipleship in Christ” (Book of Order). As such, it is the responsibility of the candidate to embrace and teach the congregation to be engaged in God’s mission rather than their own. The candidate helps the congregation *to understand their purpose as a congregation in the work that God is doing* around them. It is God’s work in which we engage, not our own and the candidate should help the congregation understand that they are a vital part of the work. It is the pastor’s job to prepare and encourage them to fulfill their missional purpose (See the Sample Learning Plan for further information.).

Administration:

“Mission determines the forms and structures needed for the church to do its work...Administration enables the church to give effective witness in the world to God’s new creation in Jesus Christ and strengthens the church’s witness to the mission of the triune God.”

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G-3.0106 The CP will have many opportunities to practice administration skills from participating in the development of, reading and supporting the church budget to helping to guide others as they serve in various ministries. To be an encouraging and competent administrator is critical to providing congregation members opportunities to develop their own skills as well as helping to keep the church budget, supporting Session in their leadership of all ministry activities, and encouraging the spiritual growth of all members as they present the gospel effectively to those around them.

Character and Call

“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.” (Book of Order) The candidate should be able to articulate their sense of call and have it confirmed by their spiritual leaders, friends and the Committee on Ministry recognizing that this sense of call will assist them in faithfully executing their role as pastor.

Additionally, the candidate’s life should be characterized by the desire to live out the gospel daily, practicing spiritual disciplines, forgiving and forbearing, seeking counsel and directions as well as gratefully and eagerly engaging with their mentor/coach as required by the *Book of Order*.