

**Policy and Process ~ COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER  
IN FOOTHILLS PRESBYTERY**

**POLICY**

**To enter into the study to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder in Foothills Presbytery, one must be an active member of a Foothills congregation and an ordained Ruling Elder, who has completed at least one full, active 3-year term in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.**

1. Before proceeding to any other steps, please meet with your pastor or Session moderator and together read section G-2.10 on Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Pastoral Service in the most recent edition of the *Book of Order, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), Part II,*.
2. A written application form (including release for background checks) must be completed and endorsed by the Ruling Elder's Session and then sent to the Committee on Ministry (COM) via Foothills Presbytery Office.
3. The applicant must meet with the Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) Supervisory Committee of COM or its representatives to be approved pending acceptable results of psychological testing and receipt of acceptable background checks.
4. Applicant takes psychological testing as designated by the CRE Supervisory Committee.
5. Approval of credit for courses will be granted based on the information below. However, seminary course work is often considered for those who have taken the appropriate courses. If this is true in your case, please have a transcript and syllabus from your institution sent to Foothills Presbytery Office. After evaluating the prior coursework, you will be notified which courses will be applied toward your certification requirements.
6. All courses outside the approved scope of courses, will be considered by the CRE Supervisory Committee
7. The CRE Supervisory Committee will appoint a Covenant Partner to each CRE Applicant. This relationship should be maintained with at least a quarterly contact, including prayer and support.
8. When the 8 required courses are completed, the CRE Applicant shall meet with the CRE Supervisory Committee to be considered for recommendation to come under COM's care and placed on the Pulpit Supply. It is at this meeting, the CRE Applicant will give a 5-minute homily.
9. The COM makes the name of the ruling elder ready to receive a commission available to those churches which it deems might benefit from the CRE's services.
10. When a congregation desires the services of a CRE and has written a covenant specifying the work of that CRE, the Examinations Commission of Foothills Presbytery will examine the ruling elder ready to receive a commission in relation to the covenant and the content of that ruling elder's training and preparation.
11. Presbytery votes on the CRE to create the commission for a specified amount of time.
12. COM assigns a Teaching Elder to the CRE for the purpose of mentoring and supervising.
13. COM monitors the covenant relationship between the CRE and the congregation.

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**What courses are required?**

**Foothills Presbytery requires 8 Reformed core courses** to complete training to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder. Those mentioned below are ones that Foothills Presbytery has specified must be taken and passed in order to complete the training requirements.

1. Old Testament
2. New Testament
3. Reformed Theology
4. Presbyterian Polity
5. Preaching
6. Leading Worship and Administering the Sacraments
7. Pastoral Care
8. Church History

Once commissioned, Foothills Presbytery strongly suggests and encourages CRE's to take at least one continuing education course per year.

**Ways to earn course credits**

As mentioned in G-2.1002, the presbytery has oversight of the selection and training of the elder who seeks to become a commissioned ruling elder. Foothills Presbytery does the certifying of its own ruling elders. This is done through the oversight of the CRE Supervisory Committee of Foothills Presbytery. They inform the COM of persons who are being trained. Foothills Presbytery has approved 3 ways that persons can earn credit toward their certification.

**1—South Carolina Lay School of Theology** has been in existence for many years and is managed by the five SC presbyteries. The Lay School is held one weekend in March or April and one weekend in November of each year. You may take only one course on each weekend; each weekend averages ten hours with a follow up paper sent to the instructor for grading in order to complete the course. Instructors report grades to the Lay School registrar who in turn sends reports to Foothills Presbytery two times a year to update your credits.

The SC Lay School awards a certificate to persons who complete their "core" courses in the CRE Track. To earn credit in the CRE Track you must have endorsement from your Session and the CRE Supervisory Committee (on behalf of COM.) *Simply completing the 8 "core" courses at the SC Lay School will not meet all of the requirements that Foothills has put in place.* There are 8 core courses to be taken at the SC Lay School in order to receive a certificate from the Lay School.

**You are not required to take courses from the SC Lay School, although it's recommended.**

SC Lay School regularly offers courses on this schedule:

**Fall Core Classes**

New Testament Survey  
Reformed Theology  
Pastoral Care  
Church History

**Spring Core Classes**

Old Testament Survey  
Polity  
Worship and Sacraments  
Preaching

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**2—PACE (Presbyterians About Collegial Enrichment)** The Foothills Presbytery PACE Team of Equipping the Saints Committee on occasion offer some of the required core courses. They are usually 30-hour courses. They are more in depth as well as offer the CRE Applicant a more thorough and integrated experience, including reading and written assignments, projects, and/or collaborative work.

**3—On-line courses through Dubuque Theological Seminary and other PCUSA seminaries** which have been approved by Foothills Presbytery for credit toward commissioned ruling elder certification. When signing up for an online course, you must request that the seminary send notification to Foothills Presbytery in order to receive the appropriate credit. This is an additional fee. To apply for a course, fill out an online application at [www.udtslearning.net](http://www.udtslearning.net).

Most Dubuque online courses run for 12-weeks and equate to a 1.5 to 2 credit hour college course. On average the online student reads 300-500 pages, writes 7-10 pages of assignments, and spends 3-4 hours per week of class participation and preparation time. (Courses do not carry seminary or university credit.) You can pay extra to earn CEUs for the online courses. Maximum suggested number of courses to take at the same time is two. Remember, you are only permitted to take up to 3 of the 8 courses away from SC Lay School. Dubuque offers many courses online, both core courses and electives such as:

### **Core Courses and approximate start Dates:**

1. Introduction to Old Testament (January & June)
2. Introduction to New Testament (April & September)
3. Pastoral Care (March & August)
4. Presbyterian Polity (February & July)
5. Reformed Theology (April & September)
6. Introduction to Preaching (June & December)
7. Foundations of Christian Education (January & June)
8. Reformed Worship and Sacraments (March & August)

If you would like to register for any of these courses before they are listed on the homepage, please contact Katie Noonan ([DERegistration@dbq.edu](mailto:DERegistration@dbq.edu)).

**NOTE: Foothills Presbytery has set a limit that no more than 3 core courses of the total 8 required courses may be taken online.** Please have the Registrar at Dubuque send the Foothills Presbytery verification that you have completed the course and passed all requirements to receive credit.

**4—Submission of an official transcript from an accredited theological institution indicating seminary courses previously taken and passed will be considered for approval.**

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## PROCEDURE

### Training to Become a Commissioned Ruling Elder

Foothills Presbytery provides a process for ruling elders to become ready to receive a commission. This process falls under the responsibility of the CRE Supervisory Committee of the Committee on Ministry. An application and endorsement by applicants session is the first step. For the entire process, refer to the Policy information above regarding course requirements and other application information necessary and/or contact the Foothills Presbytery office.

### Review before the Examinations Commission and Presbytery

Prior to receiving a commission to a named church for a specific term and duties, the ruling elder who has completed all aspects of training to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder will meet with the CRE Supervisory Committee for the purpose of being approved for recommendation to go under care of COM. A *Covenant for Commission* shall be established between the session, COM, and the CRE prior to being examined by the Examinations Commission in the areas of Bible, Theology, Polity and Sacraments. See below. The Examinations Commission makes the decision to recommend or not that the ruling elder receive a commission. If the decision is to recommend, then the elder will also be examined on the floor of presbytery.

### Covenant for Commission

A written covenant between the session, COM, and CRE shall be agreed upon by all parties prior to an elder being examined by the Examinations Commission and prior to a commission being approved by presbytery. The covenant shall include the following:

- beginning and ending dates of the commission (not to exceed three years)
- the functions which the CRE is authorized to fulfill (G-2.1001)
- details of the relationship to the congregation, new church development or validated ministry
- specify oversight for the CRE
  - A CRE in a congregation shall have oversight by a session.
  - A CRE serving in a new church development shall have oversight by a commission of the presbytery.
  - A CRE in a validated ministry of the presbytery shall have oversight by a presbytery committee or team sponsoring that validated ministry.
- specify relationship with the COM
  - COM shall assign a Minister of Word and Sacrament as a mentor and supervisor.
  - CRE shall make periodic reports of the commission as requested by COM.
  - COM shall hold an annual review of covenant for commission.
- details of compensation, if applicable.

### For More CRE Information or Questions

Please contact [Foothills](http://www.foothillspresbytery.org) Presbytery, 864-288-5774 or [www.foothillspresbytery.org](http://www.foothillspresbytery.org)