

**COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR TRAINING PROGRAM
IN THE PRESBYTERY OF TROPICAL FLORIDA
PROCESS FOR SCREENING, SELECTING AND TRAINING PARTICIPANTS**

THE NEED IN OUR PRESBYTERY

Tropical Florida Presbytery offered its first classes to a group of elders wanting to become Commissioned Lay Pastors in the 1990s. Several of the graduates of this program serve in our churches. The direction for this program was provided by the Rev. Peter Wendell. As he approached his retirement, the Committee on Ministry asked a sub-committee to design a new format for the CLP program.

An elder who is trained in a Commissioned Lay Pastor program can provide a different ministry where ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacrament are unavailable. For example, Commissioned Lay Pastors could serve as:

- Part-time pastors in small membership churches.
- Part-time associate pastors in churches that are “too big for one pastor, not big enough to afford two.”
- Part-time associate pastors who can provide non-English worship or Bible classes in traditionally Anglo congregations that are experiencing changing demographics within the neighborhood.
- Evangelists, trained specifically to do evangelistic work or to train and support committees in a local congregation.
- Pastors having the cultural or language skills necessary to work with specific immigrant populations.

THE PROGRAM FOR SELECTING AND SCREENING LAY PASTORS

Requirements for the prospective lay pastor:

1. Ordination as elder. The Book of Order requires that a Commissioned Lay Pastor be an ordained elder (G-14.0800a).
2. Active membership in a congregation of the Presbytery of Tropical Florida.
3. Sponsorship by the local Session. Sponsorship means that the local Session
 - a. Affirms this person is presently an active member of the congregation,
 - b. Has witnessed that the applicant demonstrates a love for Christ
 - c. Believes the applicant has the ability to participate in the training program.
4. A brief statement of faith.
5. A brief biographical statement, emphasizing the applicant’s faith journey.
6. A brief statement addressing why the person seeks to be a Lay Pastor.
7. Completion of the COM training program, including the Presbytery’s School for Laity.
8. Satisfactory completion of a written examination.
9. Approval by the Committee on Ministry.

Process for the Committee on Ministry:

1. A member of the Commissioned Lay Pastor Task Force (CLPTF) and the COM liaison to the church meet with the pastor and with the session at the time session sponsorship is sought, to explain the program and clarify the session's role.
2. The CLPTF checks references on the prospective lay pastor.
3. The CLPTF conducts a police background check.
4. The Commissioned Lay Pastor Task Force interviews the prospective lay pastor.
5. The CLPTF interviews the prospective lay pastor to ascertain the person's sense of call and to clarify that a commission is not guaranteed.
6. The CLPTF makes a recommendation to the Committee on Ministry concerning participation in the training program.
7. As needs for Commissioned Lay Pastors arise, COM considers the pool of trained candidates.