

Overture:
**On Amending Book of Order G-2.1002
on Use of Commissioned Pastors**

RECOMMENDATION

The Presbytery of Palo Duro overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes: To amend Book of Order G-2.1002 to allow commissioned pastors to continue to perform certain functions after service in a particular ministry, by amending G-2.1001, Book of Order to read:

**G-2.10 Commissioning Ruling Elders To Particular Pastoral Service
G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning**

A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which training courses are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve ~~but is not~~ and is authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery subject to annual review by the presbytery. The Commissioned Pastor will carry voice and vote as Commissioned Pastor while they continue their life in the presbytery.

Rationale:

The General Assembly amended G-2.1001 in 2022 to clarify that a ruling elder could serve as Commissioned Pastor (CP) to multiple worshipping communities or missions in the presbytery, subject to approval of the presbytery and the appropriate sessions. This is a recognition by the denomination of the growing importance of the CP. Commissioning a CP for service in multiple congregations or other ministries is a frequent practice in the PC(USA).

CPs provide faithful service to our denomination and, with their gifts, provide service to congregations that might otherwise go unserved. It makes sense to allow the use of the gifts in as broad a venue as possible. Through this change in the Book of Order, presbyteries, churches and CPs will benefit in many ways. Some instances of that are:

1. Some who are serving churches as lay leaders have expressed an interest in becoming a CP but have not pursued that path because they want to serve more than one church. By this change, the call to become a CP may attract a larger number of candidates.
2. CPs who are not currently commissioned to a church are ready on the quick to fill empty pulpits.
3. Because of the expanded role of a CP, congregations will more likely opt for a CP in small, chronically empty pulpits in rural areas when a teaching elder is not available. Congregations will be served and enriched by calling on a trained and readily available pastor.
4. This change is consistent with the Presbyterian call to those who are called to be proclaimers of the word.
5. This change lifts the title, the calling, and the professionalism of this role from location to location.
6. CPs gain experience and wisdom that can be shared at presbytery and council meetings.



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