Responsibilities of Commissioned Ruling Elders - Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley (Rev. 7-1-18)

A ruling elder may be granted a local commission by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service for a designated congregation and may be allowed to perform the following functions for that particular congregation renewable at the request of the session and upon recommendation of the Committee on Ministry on an annual basis:

1. Moderate the session
2. Administer the Sacraments
3. Officiate at marriages where permitted by state law

The commission shall also specify the term of service, not to exceed three years and shall be reviewed annually. (G-2.1001)

A Commissioned Ruling Elder may be commissioned to particular service in his/her own church when there is no one else available and when the responsibility is not incumbent on the session to perform.

All Commissioned Ruling Elders are required to participate in the annual ten-hour training event provided by Presbytery, or an equivalent event as approved by the Commission on Ministry Chair, and to submit an annual report of his/her work and continuing education to the COM’s designated representative by January 1 of the year following the year of report. (G-2.1002)

The Commission on Ministry shall provide care and oversight of the Commissioned Ruling Elder program, including recommendation for commissioning. (G-2.1003 and G-2.1004) Prior to commissioning, COM shall examine CRE candidate as to personal faith, motives, and areas of instruction. (G-2.1002)

Guidelines recommended by Committee on Ministry and approved by Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley on 7/15/99:

1. Upon receiving a call or appointment, the applicant shall be commissioned by the presbytery as a Commissioned Ruling Elder in the PC(USA) for the functions specifically requested in the call or stated in the appointment, for a period of up to three years which shall be renewable upon request from the session or reappointment by the presbytery.
2. The designation Commissioned Ruling Elder shall be perpetual; however, the authority to perform one or more functions thereof shall be contingent upon the specific request for these functions in a call from or appointment by Presbytery to one or more particular congregations.
3. Those in the presbytery already designated Commissioned Ruling Elder shall retain such designation in perpetuity, but the authority to perform one or more functions thereof shall be contingent upon the specific request for these functions in a call from or appointment by Presbytery to one or more particular congregations.

Presbytery decides what to authorize for each commission; this authorization is only for the particular church or churches to which the ruling elder is commissioned. Presbytery consults with the session of the church involved and considers whether the work to which the elder is commissioned requires such authorization and/or whether the particular Commissioned Ruling Elder is ready, able, and willing to take on these activities.