

## **Authorized Lay Preacher: Steps to Commissioning**

Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley + Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

*Approved by PSV on June 29, 2013*

**ALP** = Authorized Lay Preacher

**CoLP** = Committee on Lay Preaching

**COM** = Committee on Ministry

**PSV** = Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley

**PCUSA** = Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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**ALP Defined:** An ALP is a Ruling Elder trained and supported to provide worship leadership for local Presbyterian congregations within the PSV.

- ALPs may be invited to be on the pulpit supply lists of neighboring presbyteries as arranged by COM.
- Invitations to lead worship and/or preach in non-Presbyterian churches must be approved by CoLP.
- ALPs may conduct witnesses to the resurrection (i.e. funerals, memorial services, graveside or committal services) and/or nursing home or hospital services after completion of training approved by CoLP and in accordance with ALP Guidelines.

**Steps to Commissioning:** When an individual expresses interest in becoming an ALP, the following steps are normally required:

### **Education -- Core Courses:**

Each applicant needs to complete the following core courses successfully:

- Old Testament Introduction & Exegesis
- New Testament Introduction & Exegesis
- Leading Worship (liturgy)
- Introduction to Preaching

**Transfer/Alternatives:** CoLP will consider alternative courses on a case-by-case basis. These may include courses from another presbytery or college/university/seminary.

**CoLP Retreats:** Each applicant is expected to participate in retreats led by CoLP and instructor(s). Topics may include the subject of the upcoming course(s), spiritual formation, and boundaries awareness.

**ALP Criteria:** Each ALP applicant must:

- 1) Be at least 18 years of age
- 2) Be a Ruling Elder in good standing of a church within the PSV by the time of commissioning

**Concept of Call:** A "call" in the PCUSA is the understanding and acceptance of one's purpose in God's plan. It is the coming together of a ministry need and the gifts of a person or group to meet that need.

Each applicant shall submit the following items to the CoLP Chair:

- Educational information. (i.e. minimum high school diploma or equivalent)
- An essay indicating why the applicant would like to be a lay preacher and how they are discerning their call to lead worship and preach
- A Statement of Faith (*no more than one page*)
- Endorsement(s) by his or her pastor and/or Session

**Polity class (3 hours):** A polity class will be arranged by CoLP to provide:

- 1) An overview of the PCUSA and Book of Order (i.e. Foundational, Governance, Worship, and Discipline)
- 2) Review local church governance (i.e. Session, Deacons, Trustees, bylaws, and the history of their church of membership)
- 3) An introduction to the PSV
  - a. Geographic bounds covering seven counties
  - b. Churches (number, size, historical traditions of churches)
  - c. Council, committees and teams -- their roles and relationships
- 4) ALP Guidelines

### **Leading Worship**

Each applicant will prepare and lead a worship service, including preaching the sermon, in a "neutral pulpit" (i.e. not in their home church).

Evaluation of the service will be done by at least three people, including members of the congregation and CoLP or its representatives.

### **Interview and Endorsement**

CoLP will meet with each applicant to review the items above in preparation for recommendation to Presbytery for commissioning as an Authorized Lay Preacher.

If the way be clear, CoLP will also review the commissioning service with the candidate(s).

**Renewal of ALP Commissioning** will be done on an annual basis by the Committee on Lay Preaching.

Criteria for renewal includes:

1. Leading worship a minimum of three Sundays per year  
Report when and where worship leadership took place with the name of a contact person from the churches (ex. Worship Chair or Clerk of Session)
2. Continuing Education a minimum of twelve (12) hours per year  
Occasional seminars, classes, or workshops are to be provided and/or approved by CoLP. The core courses outlined above will not be required to be taken again; however it is expected that over a period of time the ALP's continuing education will include: Bible (Old and Testament); liturgy; preaching/sermon preparation; Reformed theology/doctrine; church history; and spiritual development.