

PASTORAL MINISTRY TEAM REPORT
Yellowstone Presbytery Meeting - November 6 -7, 2026
First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman - Bozeman, Montana

The purpose of the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) is to come alongside churches, sessions, pastors and CREs to provide encouragement, support and training as we work together to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The PMT has had monthly meetings since the Presbytery meeting in June 2026.

Items for Action from the Pastoral Ministry Team:

- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery dismiss Rev. Ashley Birk to Santa Fe Presbytery at her request, and if the way be clear
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery dismiss Rev. Sarah Tunall to Presbytery of the Cascades
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery grant a waiver to the Book of Order Elder requirement of one year off between two terms to the Manhattan Presbyterian Church to allow Jim Lovell to serve for an additional two years on their Session
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery grant the United Community Church of Colstrip request for a waiver of the 1978 Covenant Agreement requirement to hold two congregational meetings with at least one year between meetings before separating from either denomination (Attachment A)
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery waive the requirement of engaging the church in the presbytery's dismissal policy in relation to the United Community Church of Colstrip departure from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery dismiss the United Community Church of Colstrip from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery adopt the proposed minimum salary guidelines for 2027 (Attachment B)
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery adopt the CRE Guidelines proposed by Pastoral Ministry Team (Attachment C)
- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery adopt the Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program Covenant Guidelines for Mentors (Attachment D)

- **PMT acted on the following items since the June 2026 Presbytery meeting:**
- approved the contract between Veva Larson and 1st Presbyterian Church of Anaconda
- approved the formation of a CRE subcommittee out of PMT to: update the CRE Guidelines for Yellowstone Presbytery, oversee the CRE Training Program including receiving and reviewing the psychological evaluations of the CRE students
- approved Chuck Carlson, Jeromey Howard, Beth McCaw, and Mirjam Haas-Melchoir to receive calls or emails from pastors seeking advice during the interim period
- approved and signed the covenant between Brian Carlisle and Community Presbyterian Church of Jordan

PMT met with the following for Annual Reviews or Exit Interviews since the March 2026 Presbytery Meeting:

- conducted Exit Interview with Brian Conklin as he is entering the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX

PMT has compiled Suggested Candidate Interview and Exam Questions which can be used by PNCs, PMT and Presbytery. They have been posted as a resource on the Presbytery website. (Attachment E)

Respectfully submitted,

Co-Moderator Cheryl Banks
Co-Moderator Debbie Ernst

ATTACHMENT A

ORIGINAL AGREEMENT

THE UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH

COLSTRIP, MONTANA

PREAMBLE

The following agreement for the UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH of Colstrip, Montana, is adopted when approved by a two-thirds vote of those present at a regularly called congregational meeting of the Colstrip Community Church, with such notice and quorum as is required by the Constitution of the Colstrip Community Church; and when approved by the respective body of jurisdiction of the United Church of Christ and The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

THE AGREEMENT

- (1) The purpose in forming a "UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH" is to provide for the worship of Almighty God and instruction in the Christian Faith, by a United Community Church which shall provide for the services of a minister, and to hold and maintain the property, real and personal, for such purposes.
- (2) The Church shall be known as "The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH" of Colstrip, Montana, affiliated with The United Church of Christ, and The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.
- (3) The "UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH" shall be subject to the respective Constitutions of the Denominations with which it is affiliated, as set forth in chapter 36 of the Form of Government of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and in the Constitution and By-Laws of The United Church of Christ.
- (4) The "UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH" shall be governed by a representative body elected by the congregation from among its members. The governing body shall have the powers of the Session of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the power of The Church Board in The United Church of Christ.
- (5) The governing body shall be called "The Church Board", and those elected by the congregation to service on The Church Board, shall be ordained in manner and form consistent with The Form of Government of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.
- (6) Initially the members of The Church Board shall be those in active service on The Board of the Colstrip Community Church, who agree to perform their ordination responsibilities under the Constitution of The United Church of Christ, and The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.
- (7) The Church Board shall report an equal share of the total membership to each judicatory of jurisdiction, and such membership shall be published in the minutes of the respective denominations. A similar report shall be made of Church School members, Baptisms, and financial expenditures, as may be requested.
- (8) The Minister or Pastor shall be called from either The United Church of Christ or The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.. Ordinarily the call shall alternate between the two denominations, and when a call is extended the procedure of his or her denomination shall be followed.

- (9) The Minister or Pastor of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH shall be a full and responsible member of each judicatory of immediate jurisdiction, and shall be subject to discipline as provided in chapter 36 of the Form of Government of The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and in The Constitution and By-Laws of The United Church of Christ.
- (10) The Minister or Pastor of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH may participate in the denominational Pension Plan of either The United Church of Christ or The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. If the Minister is already participating in one plan, membership in that plan shall be retained. If the minister is not a member of any plan, one or the other of the Church plans may be chosen.
- (11) The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH shall as soon as practicable adopt By-Laws in conformity with The Constitution of The United Church of Christ, and the Constitution of The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and subject to the approval of the judicatories of immediate jurisdiction.
- (12) The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the State of Montana. The corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of Sections (1) one (2) two and (3) three of this agreement, save that all rights and claim to real and personal property shall remain with the congregation of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH of Colstrip.
- (13) All property, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation formed in section (12) twelve above. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporation(s), if any, of the Colstrip Community Church, and it shall be bound to administer any trust property or monies received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of the Colstrip Community Church shall be the liabilities of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH.
- (14) Trustees of the Corporation shall be, at least, (3) three in number, elected by the congregation from among those in active service on The Church Board.
- (15) While recognizing the right of any giver to designate the cause or causes to which a personal gift may go, The Church Board shall annually propose to the congregation a general mission or benevolence program which shall be divided equally among the officially approved causes of each denomination.
- (16) Per-Capita apportionments or organizational assessments shall be paid to each judicatory of jurisdiction on the basis of ($\frac{1}{2}$) one half the total active membership of the UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH.
- (17) All members of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH shall be under the discipline of The Church Board according to the By-Laws agreed upon in harmony with the Constitution of each denomination where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of one denomination where the other is permissive, and at the choice of The Church Board where they may be contradictory.
- (18) The Church Board shall submit its records annually, and/or whenever requested to each judicatory of jurisdiction.
- (19) The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH may dissolve affiliation with either The United Church of Christ or The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., or both, by a two-thirds vote of two congregational meetings, held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the judicatories involved.

(20) The membership of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH shall consist of those enrolled as members of the Colstrip Community Church as of the effective date of this agreement, plus those received into membership by action of The Church Board of The UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH.

Approved by the Colstrip Community Church

on the 22nd day of January, 1978

Attest: (S) Clarice Fandrich

(S) Betty J. Peterson

(S) Myrtle Hofacker

(S) Larry Leikam

(S) Reuben Jodsaas

Approved by The Presbytery of Yellowstone of
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

on the 15th day of February, 1978

Attest: (S) Rev. John Worcester

-- The Stated Clerk

(S) Rev. Marion E. Horton

Moderator

Approved by The Eastern Association of the
Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference of the
United Church of Christ,

on the 6th day of May, 1978

Attest: Peter J. Hayn, Chairperson,
Church and Ministry Committee

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

BOOK 59 PAGE 379

DEED OF GIFT

THIS DEED, Made the twenty-fifth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fifty-eight, by the NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY, a corporation of the State of Wisconsin, grantor, to COLSTRIP COMMUNITY CHURCH, a Montana corporation of Colstrip in the County of Rosebud and State of Montana grantee, WITNESSETH:

The grantor does hereby donate, convey and quitclaim to the grantee the following described premises situated in the County of Rosebud and State of Montana, to-wit:

A tract of land lying within Section thirty-four (34) in Township two (2) North of Range forty-one (41) East of the Montana Principal Meridian, more particularly described as follows: beginning at the West quarter corner of said Section thirty-four (34) thence North forty-four degrees thirty-eight minutes East ($N44^{\circ} 38' E$) a distance of two hundred and 75/100 (200.75) feet more or less to a point which is the intersection of the Northerly line of Main Street in Colstrip, Montana and the Westerly line of Third Street in Colstrip, Montana; thence North seventy-two degrees zero minutes East ($N72^{\circ} 00' E$) along the Northerly line of said Main Street a distance of seven hundred eighty (780) feet more or less to a point which is the intersection of the Northerly line of said Main Street and the Easterly line of First Street in Colstrip, Montana; thence South eighteen degrees zero minutes East ($S18^{\circ} 00' E$) along the Easterly line of said First Street a distance of four hundred sixty (460) feet more or less to the true point of beginning which is the intersection of the Easterly line of said First Street and the Southerly line of Water Street in Colstrip, Montana; thence North seventy-two degrees zero minutes East ($N72^{\circ} 00' E$) a distance of one hundred seventy (170) feet along the Southerly line of said Water Street to a point which is the intersection of the Southerly line of said Water Street and the Westerly line of Front Street in Colstrip, Montana; thence South eighteen degrees zero minutes East ($S18^{\circ} 00' E$) a distance of one hundred (100) feet along the Westerly line of said Front Street to a point; thence South seventy-two degrees zero minutes West ($S72^{\circ} 00' W$) a distance of one hundred seventy (170) feet to a point on the Easterly line of said First Street; thence North eighteen degrees zero minutes West ($N18^{\circ} 00' W$) a distance of one hundred (100) feet along the Easterly line of said First Street to the true point of beginning containing thirty-nine hundredths (0.39) of an acre more or less, together with the improvements thereon.

Also a tract of land lying within Section thirty-four (34) in Township two (2) North of Range forty-one (41) East of the Montana Principal Meridian more particularly described as follows: beginning at the West quarter corner of said Section thirty-four (34) thence North forty-four degrees thirty-eight minutes East ($N44^{\circ} 38' E$) a distance of two hundred and 75/100 (200.75) feet more or less to a point which is the intersection of the Northerly line of Main Street in Colstrip, Montana and the Westerly line of Third Street in Colstrip, Montana; thence North seventy-two degrees zero minutes East ($N72^{\circ} 00' E$) along the Northerly line of said Main Street a distance of three hundred sixty (360) feet more or less to a point, which is the intersection of the Northerly line of said Main Street and the Westerly line of Second Street in Colstrip, Montana; thence South eighteen degrees zero minutes East ($S18^{\circ} 00' E$) along the Westerly line of said Second Street a distance of one hundred fifty-five (155) feet more or less to the true point of beginning; thence South eighteen degrees zero minutes East ($S18^{\circ} 00' E$) along the Westerly line of said Second Street a distance of sixty-nine (69) feet to a point; thence South seventy-two degrees zero minutes West ($S72^{\circ} 00' W$) a distance of one hundred forty (140) feet to a point; thence North eighteen degrees zero minutes West ($N18^{\circ} 00' W$) a distance of sixty-nine (69) feet to a point; thence North seventy-two degrees zero minutes East ($N72^{\circ} 00' E$) a distance of one hundred forty (140) feet to a point on the Westerly line of Second Street and the true point of beginning containing twenty-two hundredths (0.22) of an acre more or less, together with the improvements thereon.

Excepting all coal in the above described tracts of land having been reserved by the United States; excepting and reserving unto the grantor, its successors and assigns, forever, all other minerals of every nature whatsoever, including but not limited to uranium, iron, natural gas and oil upon or under the above described premises together with the right to the use of such part of the surface as may be necessary or convenient for the purpose of exploring for (by geological, geophysical or other methods), and drilling for, producing, mining, extracting, taking, storing and transporting the same; together with the right to the use of such sub-surface strata as may be necessary or convenient for the purpose of underground storage or injection of oil, gas or other hydrocarbons, water, or other substances therein, whether produced from the land or elsewhere, and also together with the right to the use, in common with the grantee, its successors or assigns of such water as may be found in, upon or produced from said premises as may be necessary or convenient for its operations, excepting water from the wells and reservoirs of the grantee its successors or assigns. The grantor, its successors and assigns, shall only be obligated to reasonably compensate the grantee or its successors or assigns for actual physical damage to growing crops, trees, buildings, fences or other structures upon said land, sustained as a result of the use thereof by grantor, its successors or assigns.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, all and singular the above-granted premises, together with the appurtenances, unto the grantee, its successors and assigns forever.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the grantor has caused these presents to be sealed with its corporate seal, and signed by its _____ President, the day and year first above written.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered
in the Presence of

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

By

President

Attest

Secretary

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
COUNTY OF RAMSEY } ss.

On this 27th day of October, 1958, before me personally appeared ROBERT S. MACFARLANE to me known to be the President and A. M. GOTTSCHALD to me known to be the Secretary of the corporation that executed the within and foregoing instrument, and acknowledged said instrument to be the free and voluntary act and deed of said corporation, for the uses and purposes therein mentioned, and on oath stated that they were authorized to execute said instrument and that the seal affixed is the corporate seal of said corporation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal the day and year last above written.



J. W. Thayer
J. W. THAYER,
Notary Public, Ramsey County, Minn.
My Commission Expires Nov. 17, 1961

164495

State of Montana }
County of Rosebud } ss.
Filed this 3rd day of Nov. 1958 at 8 A. M.
Recorded in book 59 page 379 County Clerk Howard C. LaT
2nd Bytella Marsh clerk

N.P. Raluy & Co.
Att. Gen. / Minn.

Yellowstone Presbytery 2027 Proposed Minimum Salaries

PMT recognizes that Yellowstone Presbytery continues to remain near the bottom for compensation for pastors serving in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Given that it is important to compensate pastors enough to live without financial stress, PMT asks that every congregation engage in meaningful discussion regarding compensation at the local level. On the next page we have provided five guiding questions to shape those conversations. These figures represent a 4% increase in minimum effective salaries for 2027 and are based on full time of a 40-hour work week, which should be pro-rated for part-time positions. Please read below about CRE and part-time considerations, for optional ways you can financially assist your pastor without increasing BOP dues, and for the process to petition PMT for relief.

PMT again invites congregations who struggle to meet these minimums to petition to PMT for a reduction in the minimum effective salary you can pay a pastor. See next page for instructions for petition to PMT. In addition, PMT recommends at least a similar cost-of living adjustment for all clergy currently making above minimum.

Full-Time Pastor with 3 years or less (up to 36 months) of Ordained Ministry:

Effective Salary: \$60,419

The Board of Pensions requires that the manse amount be at least 30% of all other effective salary.

Board of Pension dues will vary from pastor to pastor based on need. Full medical benefits are required for a pastor and his/her dependents based on their needs. Please contact Christine Long, Board of Pensions Church Consultant for help in establishing the correct BOP amount for your pastor at CLong@pensions.org or (215) 587-7260.

Full-Time Pastor with more than 3 years (37 months or more) of Ordained Ministry:

Effective Salary: \$63,206

The Board of Pensions requires that the manse amount be at least 30% of all other effective salary item.

Board of Pension dues will vary from pastor to pastor based on need. Full medical benefits are required for a pastor and his/her dependents based on their needs. Please contact Christine Long, Board of Pensions Church Consultant for help in establishing the correct BOP amount for your pastor at CLong@pensions.org or (215) 587-7260.

Additional Benefits for All Pastors (regardless of years of experience)

Continuing Education \$600/year (which can be accrued for up to three years)

Travel - Vouchered at the current federal rate

Study Leave - 2 weeks (cumulative to 6 weeks) including 2 Sundays

Vacation - 4 weeks including 4 Sundays

Family Leave Policy in accordance with Yellowstone Presbytery's Policy

Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)

The CRE salary is 75% of the Full-Time Pastor salary, pro-rated for part-time.

Part-Time Considerations

Part-time pastors and part-time CREs should also receive 4 weeks of vacation including 4 Sundays and 2 weeks of study leave including 2 Sundays. Part-time pastors and parttime CREs should receive \$600/year (which can be accrued for up to 3 years) for Continuing Education. The full vacation and study leave requirements apply for all Pastors/CREs who are working at least 20 hours per week.

Optional ways you can financially assist your pastor without increasing BOP dues:

1. A church can reimburse a pastor up to ½ of their FICA (Social Security and Medicare) directly to the minister who does not have to report the reimbursement to BOP (called the SECA effect). It does, however, get reported to the I.R.S. as taxable income.
2. If a minister contributes to a BOP 409(3)(b) pension, the church can match the pastor's contribution, and the church match is not included in the effective salary.
3. A church can reimburse a pastor for out-of-pocket expenses with no effect on effective salary.
4. Create an FSA (Flexible Spending Account) and/or DCAP (Dependent Care) through Hello Further for your pastor.

Petition Process

Churches finding themselves in a scenario where they are unable to meet these minimum salaries should research and document the actual numbers for a Master's Level teacher (including years of experience) and the police chief in your community. These numbers can be provided to PMT to petition for a lower minimum salary, but the exact numbers must be provided. All these requests will be taken seriously.

Questions for Congregations Based on Jamie Dunlop's Budgeting for a Healthy Church

1. Church: What do other churches in the community pay their staff?
2. Non-Church: How much does a local schoolteacher with a Master's degree, school principal or police chief make?
3. Replacement Cost: If your pastor were to leave, would you need to increase the compensation package in order to attract an individual who would do the job equally well? (Dunlop, 80)
4. Personal Budget: What makes for a sustainable family budget at different stages of life in your community (including the cost of childcare)?
5. Housing: What is the median price to purchase a home in the same zip code as the church? Could your pastor afford to live in the zip code he/she is serving?

PMT is interested in knowing these numbers, so we would welcome your committees to share these numbers back to PMT, so that they can better inform our conversations for future minimum salary guidelines.

Yellowstone Presbytery Commissioned Ruling Elder Program (Organizational Document)

I. Overview of the Position of the Commissioned Ruling Elder

G-2.1001 Functions of Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Service

When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission requires it, the presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be commissioned to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery. A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to serve in a validated ministry of the presbytery. Presbytery, in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery shall review the commission at least annually.

A. An elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who has received the endorsement of the session of the church where they are a member, been selected by the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) and has successfully completed the required training program, been examined by the PMT and received endorsement to appear before Yellowstone Presbytery for an affirmative vote with regard to the person's readiness to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) within the presbytery, if invited by the Yellowstone Presbytery and a particular church or churches shall be known as a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

B. A Commissioned Ruling Elder is one authorized by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the Gospel, officiate over Sacraments, watch over the people, and provide nurture and service to either a particular congregation or in a particular ministry within Yellowstone Presbytery. A CRE with a commission serves either at the invitation of a particular church or at the invitation of PMT with the approval of Presbytery upon the recommendation of PMT.

C. A local commission is an agreement between a particular session, a CRE and the Yellowstone Presbytery. It is similar to a "call," for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, but does not carry any rights, responsibilities, or privileges outside of the particular church. The commission shall be valid for a period of up to three years, as determined by Yellowstone Presbytery. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the Presbytery acting on the recommendation of PMT. The contract will be reviewed and approved annually by PMT.

D. The Rights and Responsibilities of CREs are limited and determined by the Yellowstone Presbytery at the time of commissioning.

E. When the presbytery determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, the presbytery, upon receiving recommendation from the PMT and the session of a

particular church, may authorize a CRE who has received the instruction and training necessary to perform any or all of the functions listed below. The Rights and Responsibilities that may be extended to CREs are:

- 1) Administer the Lord's Supper.
- 2) Administer the Sacrament of Baptism.
- 3) Moderate the session of the congregation.
- 4) Have a voice in meetings of presbytery.
- 5) Have a vote in meetings of presbytery (such vote to be counted as a ruling elder commissioner for purposes of parity).
- 6) Perform a service of Christian marriage as governed by the Book of Order.

F. Given the challenges facing many churches in Yellowstone Presbytery, PMT believes it is important to make quality preaching and pastoral leadership available in all churches, regardless of size or ability to pay a full-time pastor. Doing so sometimes requires a creative and nontraditional approach. Therefore, Yellowstone Presbytery may allow a CRE to be commissioned as an itinerant CRE, providing pulpit supply and pastoral coverage to area churches, with the authority to serve communion and perform baptisms (with the prior approval of the church session), moderate session meetings (as affirmed by PMT) and officiate weddings and funerals when asked.

G. Supervision for CREs will be provided by the PMT. Supervision may include such responsibilities as ongoing training and evaluation and support while CREs await commissioning as well as during and between commissions.

II. Administration and Management of the Yellowstone Presbytery Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) Program

A. A CRE sub-committee of the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) will administer and manage the CRE Program. The PMT will appoint 4 people (2 MWS and 2 RE) for three-year terms. No person may serve as an elected or appointed member of the program for consecutive terms, full or partial for more than six years. The sub-committee should have 3 current PMT members and all must have PMT experience.

B. The responsibilities of the sub-committee will include:

1. Develop and oversee the presbytery program for preparation of Commissioned Ruling Elders for approval of the PMT.
2. Be alert to recruiting new CRE candidates from within ministry contexts within their home congregations
3. Develop and manage an application process for CRE candidates
 - Organize and review applications and references
 - Conduct interviews for applicants
4. Oversee and manage educational preparation program
 - Monitor the progress of each CRE candidate to include:
 - Coordinating education program with candidate
 - Assigning a practicum mentor

- Review the psychological evaluation
 - Arrange a conversation with the psychologist about the candidate's evaluation and possible ways to support the candidate with a spiritual guidance counsellor
 - Interview with the candidate half way through the seminary courses
5. Upon successful completion of CRE Program training:
- Recommend candidate to PMT for final interview
 - PMT recommends candidate for commissioning by presbytery
 - CRE sub-committee assigns an MWS as continuing mentor

III. Requirements for Entering the CRE Program Include:

A. CRE applicants are required to be ordained elders of the PCUSA, to have been a member of the PCUSA for two full years and to have been active within the life of a particular congregation within bounds of Yellowstone Presbytery for a period of at least one full year prior to seeking entrance to a CRE Training Program.

B. CRE applicants must complete an application, including a written statement of their personal faith journey, and receive endorsement from the session of the church where the applicant is a member and from the CRE subcommittee. The session is asked to support the CRE applicant throughout the training process and service to the Church.

1. Endorsement by the Session means that it has reviewed the CRE applicant's application, examined the person with regard to their motives for seeking this ministry and been made fully aware that the person intends to apply to a CRE Program.
2. The Session, in its endorsement, agrees to be supportive of the applicant during the training period and agrees to support the applicant's ministry as a CRE. No person may seek CRE training without the endorsement of the church where they are a member. Support may include: praying regularly for the person, providing financial assistance for costs incurred in the CRE Program (books, 1/3 cost of the psychological evaluation, etc,) and meeting annually with the person for regular assessments. The PMT liaison will contact the session of the applicant to arrange a visit to discuss the responsibilities of the session for endorsing the applicant.

C. When the CRE applicant has completed the application, it is sent to the moderator of the PMT to be forwarded to the CRE sub-committee chair.

D. After approving the application, the sub-committee will arrange an interview with the individual.

E. Following the interview with the sub-committee, the applicant's church must complete a background check. A copy of the results of the background check should be sent to the moderator of the PMT.

F. The sub-committee will refer the completed application to the PMT to make a determination whether or not to accept the applicant into the CRE Training Program. All applicants will be notified in writing whether or not they have been accepted into the CRE Training Program.

IV. The Training Program

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. 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 authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.

A. PMT is the acting agent of the Yellowstone Presbytery and requires the following for CRE certification:

1. Becoming knowledgeable in the areas of:
 - Old and New Testament Study
 - Reformed Theology
 - Worship and Sacraments
 - Presbyterian Polity
 - Preaching
 - Pastoral Care
 - Christian Education

B. Ordinarily completing the program requires a minimum of two full years of preparation, followed by an examination by the PMT and also by Yellowstone Presbytery. After approval into the CRE Training Program, the candidate will apply to a Presbyterian seminary or one with whom the PC(USA) is in full communion and where a class in Presbyterian polity is available and enroll in classes for Commissioned Ruling Elders. Any other training programs must be approved by the CRE subcommittee.

C. It is the responsibility of each student to enroll in approved courses as required by the PMT. The CRE subcommittee must receive validation of successful completion of required courses.

D. CRE students will be assigned a practicum mentor when they have enrolled in seminary classes.

E. CRE students will be assigned a liaison by the PMT for the duration of their training. The liaison will be the PMT liaison to the local church.

F. CRE students shall be allowed (and encouraged) to preach as pulpit supply in their local church when invited by the session. No prior approval needs to be given by the PMT or the presbytery.

G. After successful completion of at least two of the seminary courses and not later than starting the fifth course, the candidate will arrange for psychological evaluation. The cost of the evaluation shall be split 3 ways:

1. Yellowstone Presbytery will pay the psychologist for the evaluation and follow up visit then bill both the candidate and the endorsing church session for 2/3 of the cost in equal parts.
2. The candidate is responsible to pay the presbytery for 1/3 of the cost of the evaluation.
3. The endorsing church session is responsible to pay the presbytery for 1/3 of the cost of the evaluation.

H. The CRE subcommittee will review the full psychological evaluation and have a consult with the psychologist concerning the results. The PMT will receive a summary of the psychological evaluation.

I. The CRE student will have a follow-up visit with the psychologist to discuss the results and any recommendations going forward as to strengths and areas to be self-aware and work on.

J. Mid-term evaluations will be scheduled with the CRE subcommittee when at least half of the required courses and psychological evaluation are completed. At this point, it will be determined whether the student continues in the program.

K. The CRE student must stay in contact with their assigned mentor to learn administration, moderating a session, baptism, weddings, funerals, and communion.

L. The CRE student shall attend all training sessions with other CREs.

M. When all class work has been completed, the PMT will schedule a final evaluation. Final evaluation may include a faith statement and biographical information, a sermon manuscript, a worship bulletin designed around the sermon, pastoral care or polity scenarios, and questions in regards to pastoral ministry deemed appropriate by the PMT.

N. Responsibility for all future oversight of the CRE then transfers to the PMT.

V. Examination and Receiving a Call

A. Upon PMT approval, the PMT will notify Yellowstone Presbytery that the applicant is ready to be examined by Presbytery and receive a commission.

B. The presbytery shall examine the individual as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. Upon approval, the

Presbytery will oversee the Service of Commissioning which may be held at the local church or Presbytery depending on the type of call.

C. The PMT shall report its local commission recommendations to the Yellowstone Presbytery. The following shall be included in the recommendation to the presbytery:

1. The terms of the contract negotiated by the PMT, the CRE, and the session using the presbytery's contract guidelines, and may include any or all of the rights and responsibilities outlined in section I.D of this policy. The PMT would be responsible for negotiating contracts with Presbytery ministries.
2. The minimum salary for a CRE will meet the presbyter's minimum terms of call for a Commissioned Ruling Elder. Also required are auto/travel reimbursement at IRS allowable rate and continuing education and professional expenses as determined by the presbytery.
3. Yellowstone Presbytery requires full coverage through the Board of Pensions benefits plan to be offered to a CRE working at least 20 hours a week based on the CRE's needs.

VI. Commissioning

G-2.1003 Commissioning Service: When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a congregation providing the services described above, it shall commission the ruling elder to pastoral service as designated by the presbytery, employing the questions contained in W-4.04.

A. Upon successful completion of the training program including examination and approval by Presbytery, the CRE candidate with a call is presented to Presbytery for a commissioning service. The commissioning service can be held at Presbytery or at the local church depending on the type of call.

B. The CRE subcommittee and PMT will be responsible for providing continuing education opportunities and support for CREs. The PMT will have the right and responsibility to make sure that CREs continue to receive support and will annually review the status of all CREs.

C. An annual written report shall be submitted to the PMT by the CRE and included in the minutes of the presbytery. Forms will be provided by the PMT.

VII. CREs With a Commission

G-2.1004 The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery. The presbytery may at any time withdraw the commission for reasons it seems good and sufficient. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.

A. It shall be the responsibility of the PMT to oversee the work of the CRE and provide the proper support during the CREs tenure in a local commission. The PMT shall assign a mentor to the CRE, ordinarily this mentor is a Minister of the Word and Sacrament.

B. During the tenure of the local commission,

1. The CRE shall ordinarily attend all session meetings.
2. The CRE shall ordinarily attend all meetings of the presbytery, being seated as an elder with voice and vote.
3. The CRE will remain a member of the church where their membership is held.
4. While serving as a CRE with a commission, they may not serve as an active elder of their local congregation.

C. Opportunities for continuing education will be provided, and CREs will have access to the same supports and opportunities as all those in pastoral ministry.

D. Dissolution of a local commission will be based on an agreement reached by the PMT, the session and the CRE.

VIII. CREs WITHOUT A LOCAL COMMISSION

A. Those not assigned a local commission do not have the rights, responsibilities and privileges of a CRE with a Commission. The presbytery must approve all commissions.

B. Have no formal responsibilities as a CRE in their home church. They are free to be active elders in their church and represent their congregation at presbytery as a commissioner.

C. CREs without a local commission may preach at congregations within the Presbytery when invited by the session or pastor. They may be given permission by PMT to perform specific responsibilities at specific times. Such as:

1. Administer the Lord's Supper.
2. Administer the Sacrament of Baptism.
3. Moderate the session of a particular congregation.
4. Perform a service of Christian marriage as governed by the Book of Order.

D. CREs without a local commission may be commissioned to serve more than one local church, or the presbytery at large in a validated ministry, with the approval of the Presbytery.

1. The CRE shall ordinarily attend all meetings of the presbytery, being seated as an elder with voice and vote.
2. The CRE will remain a member of the church where their membership is held.
3. While serving as a CRE with a commission, they may not serve as an active elder of their local congregation.

E. CREs will provide an annual report to the PMT delineating their services to the Presbytery. The PMT will conduct an annual review of the CRE and report to the Presbytery.

F. CREs are encouraged to maintain an on-going relationship with their assigned

mentor to review work and continued study. CREs not serving in a congregation or in a validated ministry are not excused from an annual evaluation conducted by the assigned mentor with the results reported to the PMT as necessary.

G. CREs who are in good standing with their home session and the presbytery may be considered by PMT for a new commission. PMT may conduct the examination and grant approval for commissioning on behalf of the Presbytery for all commissions following the initial commission and may consult with the CRE subcommittee regarding the readiness of a CRE to accept a new commission if significant time has elapsed between commissions.

IX. Special Circumstances: Elders receiving training in other contexts.

A. A person may submit a letter of request to be considered as a CRE in the Yellowstone Presbytery. The request must include verification of all classes taken, a letter of recommendation from the previous certifying body, and a personal interview with the PMT.

B. All requirements for CRE acceptance and training will need to be met, including a background check and psychological evaluation. (See section III and IV of this policy) The CRE subcommittee shall oversee this process.

C. If PMT approves, see sections V and VI for commissioning.

Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program
Yellowstone Presbytery
Covenant Guidelines for Mentors

Thank you for volunteering to mentor a layperson who feels led to serve the Lord in a designated position within the church or other ministry. Our desire is to provide these persons with a solid and well-rounded foundation to be active in whatever ministries they may be invited to participate.

Mentor responsibilities include:

1. Help the candidate to understand their call and recognize their gifting
2. Give encouragement and guidance
3. Pray with and for the candidate
4. Meet monthly with the candidate to answer questions and give support throughout the education process
5. Provide the candidate with a variety of learning experiences, such as:
 - how to utilize the Book of Worship, hymnal and other materials in preparing liturgy
 - Arrange preaching opportunities that correspond with the candidate's level of progress
 - how to serve communion
 - conduct a baptism
 - care for a grieving family and prepare a funeral service
 - how to prepare an agenda and moderate a session meeting
 - meet with an engaged couple and how to prepare the wedding ceremony
6. Submit an annual written progress report to the CRE subcommittee

You will receive a copy of the candidate's application form which lists education, experiences and interests. The candidate should be in contact with you regarding completion of each course.

CREs are responsible for maintaining the mentoring relationship including initiating contact and setting meetings. Once commissioned, at a minimum, four meetings per year are recommended, with monthly meetings being ideal.

PLEASE SEND PROGRESS REPORTS TO:
CRE SUBCOMMITTEE OF PASTORAL MINISTRY TEAM
% Cheryl Banks, Chair
8387 Far Away Trail
Billings, MT 59106
512-789-2696
cherylbanks5@gmail.com

PMT CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Assuming that most larger theological questions will be addressed in a Statement of Faith, I'd like to propose PMT focus on questions that will provide color and character into the candidate's personality and approach to ministry.

Personal Story/Faith Journey

Tell us about your pilgrimage of faith. Where are you in your faith journey?

What motivates you & keeps you going? What are your favorite spiritual practices?

Theological

Our constitutional questions ask us to "sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do." What distinctive elements of the Reformed faith would you describe as "essential," and how do they impact your life & ministry?

Leadership & Ministry Style

Take a moment to consider the Ordination Vows in W-4.4003. Is there any vow that you cannot affirm? Do you have any scruples to declare?

What are the "growing edges" of your ministry?

How do you prefer to work with others to achieve your objectives? (Leadership style)? Describe your approach to conflict.

Are there favorite themes to which you return most often in your preaching? What are they and why are they significant to you?

In your ministry, how do you seek to carry out our denomination's commitment to inclusiveness, diversity, peace, unity, and purity?

The Church

What, in your opinion, is the foremost theological issue facing the Church today?

Share your understanding of the importance and meaning of the sacraments in today's church (might be answered in the Statement of Faith).

What are your perceptions of the congregation you are being called to serve: its goals, its style & character, its particular strengths, needs, and potential? What hopes & dreams do you have for this congregation?

Ministry Together

What areas of professional development and/or continuing education do you think are most important for you in your first few years in this call?

How do you understand the connectional nature of the Presbyterian church? How do you understand accountability by each body to each body in our connections?

Tell us about your past relationship with previous presbyteries. What role would you see yourself fulfilling in this presbytery?