

Presbytery of Ohio Valley Overview for the Certification Process Ruling Elders Commissioned to Pastoral Service

Only ordained PC (USA) ruling elders are eligible to be commissioned to particular pastoral service in our presbytery. The term **certification** means that the elder has completed all of the requirements and has been authorized by the POV Academy Committee for possible commissioning in the Presbytery of Ohio Valley. It does **not** mean that any openings exist at the present time or that the elder is guaranteed to find a position even if there are openings. Finding a position is the responsibility of the certified elder, not the presbytery. The process includes the following elements:

Education. The student will satisfactorily complete coursework in the following areas: Biblical Interpretation, Reformed Theology and Church History, The Christian Life, Mission and Evangelism, Worship and Sacraments, Teaching the Bible, Polity and Administration, Pastoral Care, and Preaching the Bible. The committee's preferred educational program is offered online by Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and can be found by visiting <https://www.upsem.edu/leadership-institute/pathways-learning-leadership-2/>. A brief description of each course, including the dates the courses are offered, is attached. Courses are online, and the cost is \$100 per course. Students are encouraged to register promptly for these courses. Another alternative is the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary's CLP/CRE program. Contact cgibbons@dbq.edu or 888-207-8218. Other alternatives to these programs will require the approval of the POV Academy Committee. If students have started their education but have not completed all of their coursework, they have a maximum of ten years for that prior work to be included in their portfolios. Alternatives to the Union Seminary program will require the approval of the POV Academy Committee.

Cohort Meetings and Spiritual Life Retreat. Students will participate in occasional cohort meetings and a spiritual life retreat, the time and place of these meetings will be announced at a later time.

Portfolio. The student will compile a portfolio consisting of the following items collected in separate folders for each of the courses: a. Course summary page, b. Reading list, c. Any written assignments that were submitted, and d. A reflection paper following the completion of the course, using guidelines provided by the committee.

Application. At the time determined by the POV Academy Committee (POVAC), the elder will complete the POV Certification Application Form and submit it, along with the portfolio to date, to the POVAC. This application includes an endorsement by the student's session. Note: only students who have been ordained as Ruling Elders may apply.

Psychological and Vocational Evaluation and Background Check. The POVAC will arrange a psychological and vocational evaluation for the elder at the elder's expense. The elder's Session is encouraged to help with this expense. Background checks at POV expense will also be completed. The presbytery is using a new service, Leaderwise (formerly North Central Ministry Development Center), to provide vocational assessment and psychological screening. Those who have not completed both the vocational assessment and psychological screening within the past three years will be required to undergo the entire process through Leaderwise.

Initial Interview. After the results of the psychological and vocational evaluations and the application have been received, the POVAC will arrange an interview with the elder to discuss his/her application, portfolio including statement of faith, and evaluation results.

Final Interview. After the portfolio has been completed, the POVAC will invite the elder to the final interview to determine whether or not to certify that person ready to seek a call as a Ruling Elder Commissioned to Particular Pastoral Service. In preparation for this interview, the elder will be asked to respond in advance to a number of questions in writing. The elder will be notified in writing of the committee's decision within 1 week after the next regularly scheduled committee meeting.

Questions about the process? Please contact the presbytery office, and we will forward your questions to the appropriate person.

Union Presbyterian Seminary: Pathways Courses for Ruling Elders

Phase I – online portion is on Tuesday from 7-9 p.m.

- **Biblical Interpretation**– This course is designed to address the calling of Christian ministers to interpret biblical texts, this course features a historical overview of how the Church has approached this calling, and offers a structure for a close reading and peer discussion of a practical guide to biblical exegesis.
September 12 – October 10, 2017
Instructor: **Dr. Carson Brisson**

- **Reformed Theology and Church History** - This course is designed to provide participants with knowledge of and an appreciation for the theological tradition that is foundational for the Presbyterian Church (USA), its historical contexts, and its contemporary significance for the life of the church.
October 24 – November 21, 2017
Instructor: **Dr. Adrian Bird**

- **The Christian Life** - This course is designed to provide participants with knowledge of Protestant perspectives on the Christian life. Participants will explore biblical and theological foundations that shape understanding of the Christian life. Reflection on focused experiences of spiritual practices will engage participants in critical analysis of their own spiritual life and nurture opportunities for congregational ministry and leadership. Focused reading and writing, on-line discussion and class lectures will provide students with a basic understanding of vital components of Christian life.
February 20 – March 20, 2018
Instructor: **Dr. Cindy Kissel-Ito**

- **Mission and Evangelism** - In this course students will be challenged to articulate their own understanding of the gospel while exploring innovative ways of being a missional church in our rapidly changing world.
April 10 – May 8, 2018
Instructor: **Dr. John Vest**

Phase II – online portion is on Thursdays from 7-9 p.m.

- **Worship and Sacraments** - Worship is the central act of the people of God and the community of faith. The sacraments provide a tangible witness to God's ongoing grace and presence in the world and in our lives. Together they enrich and enliven the life of faith for all God's people. We will explore the meaning and practice of Worship, Baptism and Communion as means and experiences of grace and commission.
September 7 – October 5, 2017
Instructor: **Dr. Rebecca Davis**

- **Teaching the Bible** (description will be added soon) October 19 – November 16, 2017
Instructor: **Dr. Cindy Kissel-Ito**

- **Polity and Administration** - This course will engage the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order, its underpinnings, and its implications for mission and ministry. As part of the course, we will review administrative tasks which grow out of the Book of Order (i.e., Session meetings, committee meetings, stewardship season, personnel matters and policies, financial matters, presbytery meetings, annual statistical reports).
January 11 – February 8, 2018
Instructor: **Rev. H. Carson Rhyne**

- **Pastoral Care** - What makes pastoral care distinctive? What are some biblical metaphors that describe pastoral care? In this Pathways course we will focus on being present and listening for the needs of the other. The required text will be Giving Counsel by Donald Capps.
February 22 – March 22, 2018
Instructor: **Dr. Carol Schweitzer**

- **Preaching the Bible** - In Preaching the Bible, students will consider the “why” of preaching and learn the “how” of basic elements of sermon preparation and delivery. Students will put this learning into practice by developing, delivering, and receiving feedback on a sermon preached in their context.
April 12 – May 10, 2018
Instructor: **Dr. Richard Voelz**

Electives – online portion for the Confronting Racism course is on Tuesdays from 7-9 p.m. and the Parables course is on Thursdays from 7-9 p.m.

- **Confronting Racism in the Congregation** (description will be added soon)
January 9 – February 6, 2018
Instructor: **Dr. Rodney Sadler**

- **Parables of Jesus** - One of the signature features of Jesus's teaching was his use of parables to communicate his message. What is a parable? What are the distinctive themes in Jesus's parables? How does each Gospel focus central themes in its narrative about Jesus through his telling of parables? What do the parables have to say to twenty-first-century listeners? How does Jesus present parables in a way that leaves decision and action in the hands of those who hear? This five-week course on the Parables of Jesus will explore questions such as these, and in so doing invite participants to deepen their understanding of the Gospels, and to gain fresh insight into the mission and message of Jesus—for both first and twenty-first centuries.
May 24 – June 21, 2018
Instructor: **Dr. John Carroll**