Commissioned Pastor Job Description Guidelines & Worksheet

Some Background about the Commissioned Pastor Office

The Christian Reformed Church has long held high standards for those who are entering into ordained vocational ministry. The traditional route to be ordained as a Minister of the Word includes academic study, field experience, and examinations by seminary personnel, the Candidacy Committee, and one's calling classis. Over the years, the ordained office of Commissioned Pastor has expanded from its initial iterations as an elder-ordained "evangelist" or "ministry associate" and is now commonly utilized for ordination into a wide range of ministries.

Out of a desire to uphold these standards, which serve to prove and nurture one's sense of personal call, and in order to limit the overuse/misuse of what Commissioned Pastor job roles are meant to include, we offer this resource for helping churches put together job descriptions. If you have not yet read the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, it would be important to engage that resource before writing the job description so that you thoroughly understand what a Commissioned Pastor is, how this office can serve the church, and what the process looks like.

Commissioned Pastor is an office of "pastoral extension" in CRC polity, meaning that Commissioned Pastors extend the mission and ministry of the local church through their ministry function. Not all CRC churches have Commissioned Pastors, but when a congregation discerns a need for a particular ministry, they may begin exploring the option of creating a commissioned pastor job description with their classis. The classis is responsible for weighing in on the job description and approving it at a meeting of classis, with the concurrence of synodical deputies.

It is often the case that the church's need for a particular ministry intersects with the giftedness of a certain individual, and in that case they may have someone in mind as they begin designing the job description. In this case, the CMLT (Classis Ministerial Leadership Team) should be consulted so that an appropriate learning plan can be constructed for that person, taking into account their previous education and ministry experience. The plan should provide the needed orientation to reformed theology and should support them in developing a reformed perspective on their area of ministry focus. It should also supplement any previous training they may still need to develop competency in their area of ministry focus.

It's important that churches considering a Commissioned Pastor take one step at a time in the process. Throughout the process, the local church should be engaging with their Classis' Classical Interim Committee, and it is often beneficial to be connected with their Classical Ministerial Leadership Team.

Things to consider while crafting the job description

1. To be a pastor involves a relationship between the pastor and God's people, to represent Christ to his people and the people to Christ. How do components of this job description require a pastoral presence and relationship with the congregation or those being served?
2. The Commissioned Pastor office is a ministry of "pastoral extension." How will this position extend or deepen the ministry of your church? How will this position help "to equip the saints for the work of ministry [and] building up the body of Christ" (Eph, 4:12) that is better suited to a Commissioned Pastor than an unordained person?
3. There are three general categories of commissioned pastor office:
    a. Specialized Congregational Pastor (for example, youth pastor, music pastor, children's pastor, etc)
    b. Church Planter
    c. Non-congregational Pastor (for example, chaplain or college campus pastor)

    Exceptional scenario : A commissioned pastor serving as a Solo/lead role of established church (article 24).
    - *An individual who is already ordained as a commissioned pastor (the idea is that they should already have some CRC experience under their belt), may be called to a solo/lead role in an established church if they sign an agreement to concurrently make accountable progress towards completing the theological training required for ordination as Minister of the Word.*

    Identifying which category this job description falls under will help in determining the appropriate training, process and components of the job description. The worksheet on the following page offers specific guidance for each of these categories.

Things to consider regarding the individual who will be called to this position

1. Meeting the qualifications does not necessitate that an individual be ordained a Commissioned Pastor, just as everyone who meets the biblical or denominationally-supplied qualifications for a Minister of the Word, Elder, or Deacon is not necessarily ordained and/or installed. To bear an office in the CRC,

there is a personal calling from God (internal) and the church (external) as well as an office or position to be filled by a qualified and called person. If the church has a candidate in mind for this role, how has this person's sense of call to this role been evident/confirmed?

2. What are the most important qualifications or qualities that your church is looking for in the person who serves in this position (refer to pp. 15-18 of the Commissioned Pastor Handbook—Character, Biblical Knowledge, Theological Knowledge, and Skill-Practice of Ministry)? How will those be assessed in candidates?

Worksheet

Guidance for the "Job Responsibilities" Section

Under each position there are a variety of prompts that are intended to help your church think through this role. Not every created position necessarily includes every bullet point or needs to have responsibilities for each, but these help show what is common for elevating a position to necessitate someone who is ordained. Choose the appropriate template and provide the responsibilities/tasks that the Commissioned Pastor in or connected to your church will be expected to fulfill.

For Article 23—Specialized congregational roles (Pastor of Discipleship, Evangelism, Faith Formation, Music, Outreach, Worship, Youth, Etc.)

What are the key responsibilities of the person in this position? What may be unique about this role in your church? As you frame these, what is particularly pastoral about them, and why is it necessary to have an ordained person doing them?

- Maintaining nurture of their faith with Bible study and prayer.
- Lead and/or provide public face for your church by upholding its values.
- Work with staff members to pursue the ministry of your church.
- Expected hours in this position each week:
- Specific counseling tasks/activities
- Specific discipleship/faith formation tasks/activities
- Specific evangelistic-outreach tasks/activities
- Specific missionary tasks/activities
- Specific pastoral care/visiting tasks/activities
- Specific preaching/teaching tasks/activites
    - Preaching/exhorting in weekly worship services
    - Preaching/exhorting/teaching in a youth group setting
    - Preaching/exhorting/teaching in a small group(s) setting
- Specific worship tasks/activities
- Specific children/youth ministry tasks/activities
- Officiating or conducting weddings and/or funerals
- Administering the sacraments
- Involvement in ministerial associations
- Completing any learning plan objectives.

For Article 23—Church Planters

What are the key responsibilities of the person in this position? What may be unique about this role in your church? As you frame these, what is particularly pastoral?

- Maintaining nurture of their faith with Bible study and prayer.
- Lead and/or provide public face for your church by upholding its values.
- Work with staff members to pursue the ministry of your church
- Expected hours in this position each week:
- Specific church planting task/activities
- Specific counseling tasks/activities
- Specific discipleship/faith formation tasks/activities
- Specific evangelistic-outreach tasks/activities
- Specific missionary tasks/activities
- Specific pastoral care/visiting tasks/activities
- Specific preaching/teaching tasks/activities
- Specific worship tasks/activities
- Specific youth ministry tasks/activities
- Officiating or conducting weddings and/or funerals
- Administering the sacraments
- Involvement in ministerial associations
- Completing any learning plan objectives.

For Article 23—Non-congregational roles

What are the key responsibilities of the person in this position?

- Maintaining nurture of their faith with Bible study and prayer.
- Upholding the values of your church.
- Expected hours in this position each week:
- Specific counseling tasks/activities
- Specific discipleship tasks/activities
- Specific evangelistic-outreach tasks/activities
- Specific pastoral care/visiting tasks/activities
- Specific preaching/teaching tasks/activities
    - Preaching/exhorting in weekly worship services
    - Preaching/exhorting in nursing or care center/hospital/hospice chaplaincy
    - Preaching/exhorting/teaching in military chaplaincy
    - Preaching/exhorting/teaching in workplace chaplaincy
- Specific worship tasks/activities
- Officiating or conducting weddings and/or funerals
- Administering the sacraments

- Involvement in ministerial associations
- Completing any learning plan objectives.

Article 24—Solo Commissioned Pastor serving established church (Minister of the Word-in-training)

What are the key responsibilities of the person in this position? What may be unique about this role in your church?

- Maintaining nurture of their faith with Bible study and prayer.
- Lead and/or provide public face for your church by upholding its values.
- Work with staff members to pursue the ministry of your church
- Expected hours in this position each week:
- Specific counseling tasks/activities
- Specific discipleship/faith formation tasks/activities
- Specific evangelistic-outreach tasks/activities
- Specific pastoral care/visiting tasks/activities
- Specific preaching/exhorting/teaching tasks/activities
- Specific worship tasks/activities
- Specific children/youth ministry tasks/activities
- Officiating or conducting weddings and/or funerals
- Administering the sacraments
- Involvement in ministerial associations
- The Commissioned Pastor's work expectation should include some of their time spent studying to complete the learning plan objectives as agreed to with the Candidacy Committee and the Classical CMLT. The church will also attend to financial support for expenses related to study.

Guidance for the "Accountability" Section of the Job Description

Different contexts may best operate under different styles and methods of supervision and accountability. As above, here are a variety of prompts that are intended to help your church think through and explain how the Commissioned Pastor will be held accountable to fulfilling their role. When a bullet point begins "(For Article __ applicants)," those aspects of supervision must be included if you're creating that role.

How will your church hold this Commissioned Pastor accountable to fulfilling these responsibilities?

- The Commissioned Pastor shall meet with and provide at least monthly regular reports to the leadership of your church.
- The Commissioned Pastor shall meet regularly with a ministry mentor. The mentor should be either the senior/lead pastor of the church being served in or someone in a similar CRC ministry capacity and, if possible, geographically near to the individual.
- Your church shall support the Commissioned Pastor in submitting documentation and accomplishing learning plan objectives, as needed.
- Your church shall annually (?) review the Job Description.
- If the Commissioned Pastor is regularly preaching/exhorting, the elders and other individuals identified in your church will evaluate/review at least quarterly.
- (For church planter and missionary applicants) When involved in missionary work with Resonate Global Mission or another agency, your church will establish clear communication with that agency for endorsement and regarding oversight of life/doctrine (church) and oversight of responsibilities (organization).
- (For non-congregational-chaplain applicants) When involved in chaplaincy work, your church will be sure endorsement is received and maintained with Thrive's Chaplaincy office.
- (For non-congregational applicants) A Covenant of Joint Supervision must be developed for all pastors serving in non-congregational roles (templates can be found on this page).

If applicable, how do you expect your classis to help encourage and hold this person accountable?

- If your church expects this Commissioned Pastor able to preach/exhort beyond your congregation, the classis shall arrange for a licensure to exhort examination.
- In Article 24 cases, the classis will work with the church and individual to provide financial support for study expenses.
- In Article 24 cases, the classis CMLT shall be offering support and direction for the process towards ordination as Minister of the Word, and accountability for

determining whether accountable progress in the learning plan has been achieved and the term can be renewed.