

A Handbook for Pastoral Training

(January 2014 Revision)

Candidates and Credentials Committee
Great Lakes — Gulf Presbytery
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists,
the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work
of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all
attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of
the Son of God...

— *Ephesians 4:11–12*

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Introduction

Throughout the history of his Church, Christ has faithfully brought men forward to preach and teach his holy Word to his Body. He has used the proclamation of Scripture—with the other labors of his undershepherds—to advance his Good News throughout the world. Jesus continues to do this work today!

On every continent, Christ calls forth men to labor in the work of teaching, preaching and shepherding the people God has called to himself. As Christ continues to extend his kingdom, he continues to lay upon the men he chooses the high calling of pastoral ministry.

Jesus Christ has provided the foundation that assures that she is his and not any man's: his Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as her chief cornerstone. Jesus asserts his authority over the Church through the Holy Scriptures. It is Scripture that equips the people of God, and it is Scripture that is the source of truth for his Church. Those who would follow the person of the Lord Jesus Christ should hear his words. “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15, 21). It is the Book that is the rule for faith and life; and it is the Book through which Jesus instructs the shepherds of his Church.

The Scriptures reveal an office variously described as “pastor and teacher” (Ephesians 4:11, 12), “elder” (I Timothy 5:17) and “undershepherd” (I Peter 5:2-4) to fill an indispensable role within the life of the Body he calls his Bride. This is a high calling. Indeed it is a calling where one is keeping watch over the eternal souls of God's people. It is also a demanding calling. And it is also a wonderful calling. What are the demands of this calling, and what preparation is necessary to be equipped for this serious task?

In an effort to be faithful to Christ as the Chief Shepherd and Head over the Church, this Handbook has been prepared for the following purposes:

- To describe the process of preparation and training for a man to be ordained as a teaching elder in the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.
- To articulate the expectations of personal discipline and holiness desired in the life of a theological student.
- To give a brief sketch of the pastoral ministry for prospective students.
- To provide a “checklist” of procedures employed by the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

Section 1

Are You Called to be a Pastor?

The fact that you are reading this Handbook suggests that you have been wrestling with the issue of calling to the pastoral ministry. That wrestling can be an agonizing experience, wrought with emotional challenges.

How do you know if you are “called”? There are at least three ways of knowing whether pastoral ministry is God’s intended plan for your life. If pastoral ministry is indeed God’s call upon your life, then one way you can know of His calling is by recognizing how He has equipped you for the labors involved in that calling.

The *Directory for Church Government* in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church outlines an overview of these responsibilities. So, first we will discuss the nature of the office—its duties and demands. Second, we will discuss what the inward call is and the role that this call plays in discerning God’s will. Finally, we will discuss the outward call—the confirmation by God’s people that He intends to use you in His ministry.

The office of Ruling Elder

The Scriptures indicate no separation of office as regards the ruling and teaching elder that is to be carried on in Christ’s Church. According to their qualifications and circumstances, elders will exhibit gifts that enable them to discern and meet the needs of the flock through oversight (ruling) and exhortation.

Among them will be those more qualified to engage in the study and public proclamation of the Scriptures. This distinction of function warrants the continuance of the popular titles of “ruling elder” and “teaching elder” when understood as stated above. (The office of deacon was given by the Holy Spirit to the New Testament Church to assist the Church in the fulfillment of its ministry.)

The following description of the office of Ruling Elder is cited from the *Directory of Church Government*, chapter 3, section 1:

A. Qualifications of the ruling elder

Those eligible to be called as ruling elders must:

1. Be a male communicant member in good standing in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.
2. Evidence the standards of character and conduct consistent with those set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7; in Titus 1:5-9 and I Peter 5:1-3.
3. Be knowledgeable and committed to the subordinate doctrinal standards of the denomination as being consistent with the Scriptures.

B. Duties of the ruling elder

1. Active pastoral care of the congregation.
2. Regular attendance and participation in Session meetings.
3. Involvement in and oversight of the teaching ministry of the congregation.
4. Involvement in and oversight of the observance of the sacraments.
5. Training of the whole congregation to mature discipleship.
6. Ministry to the erring and the lost.
7. Visitation to the sick and needy.
8. Dedication to the advancement of the whole Church of Christ.
9. Regular participation in the higher courts of the Church.
10. Meeting jointly with the board of deacons periodically for evaluation and growth in their respective ministries.

C. Privileges of the ruling elder

1. Moderation of any court of the Church.
2. Permanent membership on his Session.
3. Voting membership in the higher courts.
4. When deemed by his Session or Presbytery to be qualified in the areas of personal godliness, theology, Biblical knowledge and church history he would be eligible for
 - a. occasional ministry of the Word in the congregation
 - b. occasional ministry of the Word within the denomination
 - c. occasional pronouncing of the benediction.
5. A ruling elder may qualify for more regular occasional preaching of the Word and pronouncing the benediction...by satisfying the Presbytery of his readiness for this ministry by being examined in personal godliness, English Bible, systematic theology, and the preaching of an expository sermon. (see Eligibility to Preach, IIc2e)
6. Under extraordinary circumstances, to administer the sacraments when specifically appointed to do so on a given occasion by the Presbytery.
7. Appointment, in special circumstances, by Presbytery, to serve as a provisional elder of another Session.

The office of Teaching Elder

The official proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments in the congregation shall be entrusted in ordinary circumstances to the one who has been trained to exercise his teaching gifts. Those displaying the gift for the teaching ministry shall be encouraged to undertake sufficient academic preparation and present themselves for public examination by Presbytery in order to devote themselves to live in obedience to Christ and His Word in full-time ministerial service with all the privileges and duties this involves.

The elder who publicly teaches exercises a broader responsibility, but has no higher authority than any other elder. While all the elders have pastoral responsibilities, common practice warrants the use of the title “pastor” for those who are called as teaching elders of congregations. Congregations whose size and/or work require additional teaching elders (associate pastors) will follow the same procedure.

The following description of the office of Teaching Elder is cited from the *Directory of Church Government*, chapter 3, section 2:

A. Qualifications of the Teaching Elder

Along with those qualifications specified in the *Directory for Church Government*, Chapter 3, Section 1.A., those eligible to be called as teaching elders must display the Spirit’s call and gifts to study diligently and proclaim publicly the Word of God (1 Timothy 5:17).

B. Duties of the Teaching Elder

Along with duties specified in the *Directory for Church Government*, Chapter 3, Section 1.B., the duties of a teaching elder include:

1. Proclaiming God’s Word in worship.
2. Administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
3. Conducting wedding and funeral services.

The inner call

First Timothy 3:1 states that “if a man desires the office of an elder he desires a good work.” Just as God works in us to draw us unto salvation, so He “works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). One whom God intends to use in pastoral ministry will never be coerced to an assignment within Christ’s Church against his will! God will work in his heart to make this the desire of his heart. Sometimes through the preached Word, a workshop or one’s own daily devotions, God brings this desire to one’s heart. Sometimes, inward certainty comes early. Other times extended

prayer and soul-searching are necessary.

There is usually an awareness that God is calling a man into the pastorate that grows and comes to definition over an extended period of time. This “inner call” may be somewhat nebulous to define. Some have skewed this teaching into a very mystical, esoteric concept. Put in its simplest form, the inward call to pastoral ministry is a desire to proclaim God’s Word, to shepherd His people, and to administer the sacraments. This inner call is the conviction that one has been set apart by God to proclaim the message of His Word and administer the sacraments, which Jesus has provided His Church.

A pastor is a finite person entrusted with the Word of God. He is a man of God with a specific call. Those who fill the ministerial office must be among the most mature of Christian people. It is important to recognize that the inward call in its most authentic form will be known in the hearts of those who have a certain degree of maturity in every area of their lives.

If one senses a desire to enter pastoral ministry, he should carefully inventory his personal life according to the Scriptural demands of I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-16 and I Peter 5:1-3. One who is called to the pastoral ministry is not only called to the study and proclamation of God’s Word, but he is also called to a high standard of godliness and piety. He is an example, an ambassador of Christ.

As a man begins to wrestle with the inward call to pastoral ministry, he ought to make this known to his elders and mentors. As God gives grace, he should then seek to begin exercising the gifts he believes God has given him for ministry in the local church. This can take the form of teaching Bible school, discipleship, youth ministry, jail ministry, seniors ministry, etc. This exercise of gifts may take many different forms. However, it is of the utmost importance that one who senses an inward call seeks to exercise his gifts to pursue that call. As he carries on this ministry in the congregation, his heart will begin to burn with passion for the Lord’s work. He will begin to deeply love it. It will be the fruits of this greater service unto Christ, both in the lives of those to whom he is ministering and in his own heart, which will provide that cumulative certainty necessary to proceed with the outer call.

The outer call

If God is indeed calling a man to the office of teaching elder, his calling and gifts will be evident to those who know him. The burdens and inclinations of the man will be evident progressively to those around him as he

begins to exercise the gifts God has given him in pursuing his inward call. Thus, there will be a series of outward calls that confirm, refine and substantiate the inward call to the pastorate.

These outer “calls” include:

- Affirmation by the man’s local Session
- Multiple affirmations by the Presbytery, especially through the examination and internship processes
- A call from a congregation to shepherd and feed them as a teaching elder.

Section 2

The Spiritual Life of the Elder

Those who are called by God to train others in godliness must be godly themselves. Personal holiness, or piety, is a way a life, a communion with God and walking with God. Paul calls his young disciple Timothy to, “watch your life and doctrine closely,” – first life and then doctrine, in that order. “Persevere in them,” urges Paul, “for if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (I Tim. 4:16). To Titus, the Apostle wrote, “In everything set them an example by doing what is good” (Titus 2:7).

The enormity and complexity of the pastoral office is set out in Richard Baxter’s *The Reformed Pastor*. Besides explaining what is involved in preaching, Baxter refers to evangelism, counseling, building up believers, pastoring families, visiting the sick, reproof and admonishing offenders and maintaining discipline, all of which, urges Baxter, must be carried on as follows: purely, diligently, and laboriously, prudently and orderly – with plainness and simplicity, humility, severity mixed with mildness, seriousness, earnestness, zeal, tender love, patience, reverence, spirituality, earnest desires and expectations of success, a deep sense of our own insufficiency and dependence upon Christ, and unity with other ministers! Only a robust devotional life, a pulsating piety, could possibly meet the needs of such an exacting office or provide the qualities of life it demands.

This area of spiritual life and personal piety is hard to measure. It is easily neglected. However, it is from the heart that all the issues of life flow, and if a student does not develop a deep, intimate and daily communion with Christ, his ministry will either dry up or overwhelm him.

The pastor must grow throughout his pastoral training in the inward life of holiness before God. Some of the areas in which he must grow are his devotional life, his reading and memorization of the Scriptures and the godly discipline of his finances. The temptation is to put off these vital disciplines. Many have tried to gloss over these critical disciplines only to discover that their spiritual life has withered and they have nothing to give to the flock.

Devotional life

The elder lives his life before the face of God, and will answer before the throne of God for his deeds. His preaching and teaching and pastoring and leading will only be effective if it is the outflow of an abundant, growing love relationship with Jesus. The student must learn to nurture this relationship to Christ during the training period. He must be diligent in the duties of meditation, intercessory prayer, praise and repentance.

The elder must be meditating deeply upon the Scriptures in daily devotions. He must be reading and encountering the Almighty God in the Old and New Testaments. He must be seeing his sin exposed by the light of God's Word, and then repenting and fleeing from that sin.

The duties of the prayer closet are another area often squeezed out by the rush of the life of ministry. The student must carefully set aside time of praise to God and of intercession on behalf of others. He should learn to cast his cares upon God and walk in faith in God's provision.

Reading Scripture

The elder is a man whose calling is intimately connected to the Holy Scriptures. He must know them. He must be thoroughly familiar with their historical, grammatical contexts, and be able to use Scripture to more thoroughly understand other Scriptures.

There simply is no substitute for careful and voluminous reading of the Holy Scriptures. The teaching elder will do this for the rest of his life, and the discipline must be carefully developed. Students should have a goal of reading through the Bible cover to cover at regular intervals throughout their lives. They should become familiar with the progressive revelation of redemptive history. They should see the shadows and types of the Old Testament fulfilled in the New Testament. They should learn to see Christ as the center of all special revelation.

Again, there is no substitute for the regular reading of Scripture and finding God speaking to one through the Bible. Many find it helpful to read Scripture aloud. This basic familiarity with the Scriptures is possibly the most common deficiency in pastors. Don't just know ABOUT the Bible, but know God's thoughts in His Word.

Memorizing Scripture

In addition to the devotional reading of Scripture, the pastoral student should be growing in his knowledge of Scripture by committing more and

more of the Bible to memory. The Word is the breath of God to His people (II Timothy 3:16). The pastor must be full of the internalized Word in order to save both his own soul and the soul of his followers (I Timothy 4:16).

“Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11). The pastor must have engrafted the Word for the sake of his own soul (James 1:21). The thoughts and intentions of one’s heart are discerned by the revelation of the Scriptures applied to the heart by the Spirit. (Heb. 4:12). If the pastor has not developed the discipline of regularly renewing his mind through fixing the Truth in his mind, he will wander from the path of righteousness.

Relationships

The pastoral ministry is built upon relationships. The pastor’s calling is to lead and nurture people. The effective elder must have the ability to develop close-knit friendships based upon trust. Building strong and enduring relationships is a skill that is learned through time and experience. A man who would become an elder must ask the Lord to uncover and deal with anything in his life that would block his ability to have loving relationships with others. Family relationships, church relationships and community relationships all play a crucial part in the ministry of the pastor.

The pastor needs to carefully develop a biblical code of ethics which will guide him in relationships. There are many necessary relationships this world despises, and other immoral relationships this world glorifies. For example, hundreds of pastors in the 19th century conveniently stayed away from near relationships with black slaves. This was wrong. Today, the opposite extreme is readily accepted as pastors are approving of close relationships with practicing homosexual ministers. The pastor must consider how to rightly relate to these and many other types of people. He must learn to build relationships, to establish levels of friendships, and to maintain friendships in the midst of other pressures.

Finances

Another area that reflects the spiritual life and vitality of the elder is his finances. The elder should live in obedience to God with regard to his personal finances. He must learn to live within his means. The man of God should be content with the station in life God has given him.

The elder should be faithfully giving and investing in the work of God’s Kingdom. He should discipline himself and his family to live within a bud-

get and, as far as possible, live in financial freedom and learn to pay his own way. Jesus said that one of the requirements necessary for a man to be entrusted with true spiritual riches is first to be faithful in the use of money (“unrighteous mammon”; Luke 16:10-12). A man who would be an elder must first show willingness and an ability to provide for his own financial needs and have demonstrated an ability to do so.

Section 3

The Preparation and Growth of Pastoral Students

Many a man has tried to put off the development of the daily disciplines of godly living during his seminary days. However, these men quickly discover that they lack spiritual fitness. They eventually find that their ministry is built upon hypocrisy rather than Christ-centered example.

Personal godliness

Powerful preaching of God's Word springs forth from the pastor's own personal walk with God. This communion with God must be nurtured by obedience in the "little" areas of life. The work of the pastor as a proclaimer of God's Word demands a lifestyle that is above reproach, and, therefore, the practice of preaching can never be divorced from the person of the preacher.

The student must diligently continue in his war against sin throughout his preparation. A life continually progressing in holiness and lived before the face of God must be the passion of the man of God. He must watch his own soul, lest he fall into temptation. He must strive to know God through His Word, and develop repugnance for sin.

Family life

A pastor's family can be either his greatest asset or his greatest liability. The greatest contradiction of a pastor's preaching often comes from the wayward lives of his family. Building strong family is a tremendous challenge for a pastor, but the most powerful affirmation of God's message in his life is a joyful and godly family.

If a student's family is going to become a part of his life message, he must faithfully build his family during his seminary years. He must make his family a priority during these formative years, or it will never happen later. He must be the spiritual leader of his family. He must love and cherish and listen to his dear wife. He must discipline his children in the Lord. He must make his family a priority.

A student must learn how to protect his family from the pressures and problems of the pastoral ministry. He must make ample time to minister to their needs, and provide for their well-being. The student needs to schedule regular times alone with his family to minister to their needs. His priorities must be first God, second family, and third ministry.

Ministry skills

A student preparing for pastoral ministry should be continuing to develop the necessary skills for ministry. He should be growing in his ability to turn conversations toward spiritual matters. He should grow in his ability to speak the Gospel clearly. He should be active in leading people to a personal commitment to Christ. He should be leading new believers to spiritual maturity until they become disciples of Jesus and he should be equipping laborers in the Church.

Another critical area of ministry training is learning to serve effectively as a member of a team. The man of God should learn to be a man under authority. He should have a learner's heart and be willing to submit to the commands and directions of his superiors.

The effective pastor will know how to lead others in establishing goals and implementing planning strategies. He should know how to motivate people, gently and firmly guiding them in the work of ministry.

These are some of the ministry skills that students must be learning before, during and after their seminary experience. They must learn to step forth confidently, lead in the direction of service and ministry, and trust God for all the needed provisions.

Theological and academic education

It is the exposition of Scripture applied to contemporary culture that is the ultimate goal of the pastor. In all the facets of his ministry he must have the specific goal of helping people to understand and obey the truths of God's Word. To do that well, the pastor must be a disciplined student. He must have an exceptional understanding of: the Scripture he is expounding; the culture into which he is expounding it; and, the level of spirituality and maturity of the people to whom he is preaching.

This understanding does not come simply by native abilities or observing life. Rather, it comes from diligent study as the pastor explores the wisdom of both the past and the present. He should be equipped to exegete Scripture accurately, and to discern the fallacies inherent in other worldviews.

The student should not “just” go to seminary, but he should develop the mindset and love of continual learning and growing throughout his life.

Specific projects before seminary

Students should memorize the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

Students should take advantage of seminary course work that is available in the area where they are already living.

If at all possible, students should begin studying Greek and Hebrew before going to seminary.

An important note on theological preparation

The examinations a student will complete during the course of his formal education are described in later sections of this Handbook (§§9–10). At three points in the course of those examinations, the student will be asked the “Queries for Ordination, Installation, and Licensure” (pp. G–2 and G–3 in *The Constitution of the RPCNA*). Students should acquaint themselves with these vows early in the course of their studies, and be prepared to affirm them.

Special notice should be given to the fourth query: “Do you believe in and accept the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, as being agreeable to, and founded upon, the Scriptures?”

A great deal of the student’s theological education is aimed at preparing him to take that vow. He should therefore have that query in view so that all his theological studies—being studies of “the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth” in the aforementioned standards—might be pursued with the conscientious goal of becoming a co-confessor of the church’s received faith.

Abraham Kuyper explained the importance of ministers subscribing to the church’s received confession, saying, “One man must supplement another [in the exposition of doctrine]... As in social life one ploughs, a second spins, and a third sails the seas, and out of the interaction of these divided labors the full rich life is born; even so it is in the world of thought.” (“Calvinism and Confessional Revision,” p. 484.)

The creeds and confessions of the church are not inerrant (*WCF* 31.4); nevertheless, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would assist the church in her understanding of the Word (Jn 16:13; cf., *WCF* 31.3). It is, therefore, with

confidence that what Jesus promised is true that ministers receive with a spirit of trust rather than skepticism, the conclusions of the church's Spirit-assisted wrestlings to understand the Scriptures. These conclusions are passed down to us in the ecumenical creeds and reformed confessions of the Church. The *Westminster Standards* are a full and authoritative expression of the doctrines contained in those earlier creeds and confessions.

In the Reformed Presbyterian Church, we confess that it is due to sin that the church has divided into the many distinct denominations that exist, today (*RPT* 25.14). It ought to be our earnest prayer and endeavor to see the church grow in holy unity. This must not be sought through mere organizational union, but through a growing unity of faith. Therefore, as distinct bodies within the confessing church have unique doctrinal insights to contribute to the broader church, those denominational testimonies ought to be held forth for the edification of congregations within that branch of the church as well as that of the broader church. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America has collected the doctrinal gains of her heritage into the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*. Students preparing for ministry in this branch of the church should become familiar with the doctrinal testimony which, by seeking ordination in the RPCNA, they will be promoting.

If, in the course of the student's theological education, he has doubts about any doctrinal position in either the *Westminster Standards* or the *Reformed Presbyterian Testimony*, he ought to seek help understanding the reasoning behind the doctrine. This help can be pursued from a professor at seminary, a pastor in the church, or the Candidates and Credentials Committee. Such questions ought not be regarded as cause for shame or embarrassment, either by the student or by those who discuss these questions with him. It is an important part of theological study to examine and to seek answers. However, as all such confessional documents are the result of godly men together studying the Scriptures in prayer, doubts about their conclusions should be examined with a teachable spirit and not a presupposition of error.

The spirit of the age in which we live is one that promotes individual opinion and skepticism of authority; even theological students and ministers need to guard their hearts from the influence of such attitudes. Therefore, students who encounter doubts about certain doctrinal conclusions ought to give themselves to a careful and thorough understanding of the reasoning behind the position in dispute before taking a personal excep-

tion to it. Furthermore, he must not satisfy himself that he has adequately studied the matter until he has spoken about the matter with a professor or a minister who is well-equipped to explain the position. In a good faith spirit of trust, a student should give every effort to be taught the doctrine he initially found doubtful.

If, through the course of such study, a student concludes that the corporate testimony of the church is in error, his personal conviction to the contrary ought to be made known to presbytery in one of the oral theology exams that are part of his public examination. The first and second oral theology exams are the setting in which the student's specific views on various aspects of the church's confession and testimony are examined by presbytery. And it is in those examinations that presbytery is to determine whether the student's views are in keeping with subscription to the church's testimony and sustain or not sustain the exam accordingly.

Unlike typical exams at seminary where a student receives a passing grade based on the percentage of questions answered correctly, a presbytery ought "not sustain" an exam if even one point is found to be in opposition to "the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth" in the denominational standards. At the points of certification, licensure, or ordination—when the queries are administered—the student should prepare to answer the queries "in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation" (*WCF* 22.4), guided in part by presbytery's determination to sustain his theological exams. The practice of stating exceptions at the point of the queries, however, is imprudent and ought not take place.

Therefore, in anticipation of the queries, a student should take the initiative to resolve any uncertainties well beforehand. Also, rather than avoiding difficult questions in theology exams, a student should discuss doctrinal doubts with the Candidates and Credentials Committee prior to taking theology exams. The Committee will work with the student and with the assigned examiner to ensure that the doctrinal dispute is raised in as honest and as respectful a manner as possible to grant the student the best opportunity to express himself. It will then be possible for the entire presbytery to come alongside the student and to offer any added perspective that may have been previously overlooked in his study of the issue.

Furthermore, if an issue of doubt is raised in the first theology exam (i.e., prior to certification to preach), it is within the prerogatives of presbytery to sustain the exam on the understanding that the student is still teachable

and that he will not preach contrary to the denominational testimony, since a second opportunity to take up the student's views is afforded in the second theology exam.

It must be kept in mind that the purpose of confessional instruments is to preserve and promote the unity of the church. Therefore, all individual exceptions to the united testimony of the church ought to be resolved in a manner that seeks the peace and unity of the church. The teachableness of the individual student and the *semper reformanda* teachableness of the whole church are important features of confessional fidelity.

Two final words of counsel to students should be given. First, not every question about a doctrinal position is necessarily a point of doubt or exception. Students should be careful to discern the difference between a matter about which he has questions and a position with which he disagrees. In the spirit of confessional ecclesiology, a student ought to be willing to trust the painstakingly and prayerfully developed testimony of the church and to stand in a presumed position of accepting the confessed stance while exploring his questions. A student with questions (but not yet disagreement) should, in good conscience, be able to affirm the queries during his certification to preach as he continues to examine his questions.

Second, while theology is a discipline that requires precision with words, it must be admitted that creeds and confessions often contain clumsy or awkward expressions. The unfortunate confusion that has long attended the fifth article of the Apostle's Creed—"he descended into hell"—is a prime example. As illustrated by Calvin's exposition of that line of the Creed (*Institutes* 2.16.8–12), we ought to take difficult wording in the best light one can honestly take it. Seminary is a time when students are developing alertness to the fine points of theological expression, but care needs to be given not to let unfortunate word choices stir a sense of opposition to the faith confessed by the brethren.

Carl Trueman offers this apt counsel from his own preparation for ordination vows, "We need to understand that subscribing to a creed or confession does not mean that we believe every phrase in the document was as well expressed as it could have been or that if we wrote it today we would use exactly the same vocabulary and phrasing... As I read the Standards in preparation for ordination, I did not make the mistake of confusing the awkwardness or deficiencies of some of the phrasing with fundamental deviations from biblical teaching." (*The Creedal Imperative*, p. 192.) Students should be careful to distinguish between perceived inadequacies in how a

doctrine is framed and “fundamental deviations from biblical teaching.”

Subscription to the church’s standards does not necessitate a conviction to their inerrancy. The *Confession* itself admits that “all synods and councils, since the Apostles’ times,... may err; and many have erred...” (31.4). But it does require a good faith confession that they accurately summarize the true teaching of Scripture to the best of our understanding at this stage in the continuing reformation and growth of the church’s faith.

Section 4

Initial Steps

The following directions are drawn from the *Directory for Church Government*, chapter 3, section 2.c.1:

Endorsement by the Session

The elders of the congregation should be actively involved in mentoring the man considering pastoral ministry. They should be examples of spiritual life and personal integrity, and be eager to impart whatever example, knowledge or counsel they can to the man.

When a man evidences growth in a fruitful life and ministry as outlined above, and has sensed the inward call of God upon his life, his initial step of action is to seek the counsel and blessing of his Session to pursue preparation for becoming a teaching elder. The Session's response should be based upon its personal knowledge of the man and observing the necessary gifts in the man's life. The members of the Session should be thoroughly acquainted with the man's doctrine, faith and practice. The Session's decision should be formally made after careful prayer and consideration by the elders and in consultation with the man's other spiritual mentors.

The Session's endorsement should serve as an initial confirmation of the man's inward call.

If the man's Session gives its blessing and approval to the man's seeking the teaching eldership, the elders should carefully consider the spiritual, financial, and logistical provisions for the student and his family. They should assist the student in understanding the educational requirements of Presbytery, and should assist the student in becoming acquainted with members of the Presbytery.

Interview by the Candidates and Credentials Committee

Once the man's Session has given its blessing to the man seeking to become a teaching elder, the man and the Session petition the Candidates and

Credentials Committee for a personal interview.

The Presbytery has appointed the Candidates and Credentials Committee to facilitate its work with men seeking to become teaching elders. This Committee works with congregations to facilitate the Presbytery's work of identification, oversight, preparation and initial placement of men training for the ministry. The Committee is responsible for:

- Identifying and encouraging young men interested in the pastorate and theological education.
- Overseeing the preparation of all students under care of Presbytery and licentiates.
- Helping licentiates and students find their first place of service as a teaching elder.

Once a Session has petitioned Presbytery through the Candidates and Credentials Committee to consider a certain man for pastoral training, the Committee will conduct an extensive interview with the man, often including his wife. Areas covered will include: his testimony of his relationship with Christ, why he believes he is called to pastoral ministry, his gifts, his ministry experience, training and fruitfulness, his family circumstances, the extent of his wife's support to ministry, his personal godliness, his finances, his previous formal education, his anticipated timing, etc.

If the Candidates and Credentials Committee believes the man is ready to move forward, it recommends to Presbytery that he be "taken under care as a student of theology." The Committee may also recommend alternatives to the man or ask that certain other requirements be accomplished before recommending him to the Presbytery.

Taken under care of Presbytery as a Student of Theology

When the Candidates and Credentials Committee has supported the man's intentions, it requests Presbytery to take the student under care as a student of theology. Being "taken under care" is the formal phrase used to describe the student's enrollment in the course of formal preparation laid out by the Presbytery. This step should only be taken after at least a portion of the members of Presbytery have become acquainted with the student.

The student must attend the Presbytery meeting where he is to be taken under care. Representatives from the Candidates and Credentials Committee and the man's Session will introduce him to Presbytery. Usually he will be asked to give a brief testimony and explain his call to pastoral ministry.

Section 5

Formal Training

The official proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments in the congregation shall be entrusted in ordinary circumstances to the one who has been trained to exercise his teaching gifts. Those displaying the gift for the teaching ministry shall be encouraged to undertake sufficient academic preparation and present themselves for public examination by Presbytery in order to devote themselves to live in obedience to Christ and His Word in full-time ministerial service with all the privileges and duties this involves.

Educational Requirements

In ordinary cases a man shall complete a bachelor's degree or its equivalent before undertaking specific theological education. There are some circumstances where this requirement may be waived or an equivalency proposal may be considered by the Candidates and Credentials Committee.

Upon completion of his collegiate degree or its equivalent and his reception by Presbytery as a student of theology, he shall be expected to complete the course of seminary instruction required by the Presbytery leading to a Master of Divinity or its equivalent.

Under ordinary circumstances the student shall be expected to attend at least one full year at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Internships

Most seminaries, including the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, require some type of supervised internship experience as a degree requirement. The student will be expected to have completed at least one summer internship and preferably, at least one year-long internship. Before a student commits to a particular internship, he should seek the approval of the Candidates and Credentials Committee. Evaluations from internships

will be reviewed by the Committee. The Presbytery sees these “on-the-job” training experiences as a very important part of a man’s preparation as well as a good opportunity to further evaluate a man’s gifting and readiness for pastoral ministry.

(See Appendix I for “Guidelines for Internships for Seminary Students” at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. This includes a sample internship agreement.)

Oversight During Training

The communication between a student, his Session and the Candidates and Credentials Committee should be carefully maintained during the entire training process. The wisdom of the elders should be freely available to the student. Regular responsibilities should include:

Responsibilities of the Candidates and Credentials Committee

As a “student under care” the man is officially placed under the oversight of Presbytery’s Candidates and Credentials Committee, which is responsible for overseeing the student’s theological education and preparation for ministry.

The Candidates and Credentials Committee is responsible to work with the student’s Session in outlining the necessary course of study which best meets the needs of the student.

Specific responsibilities of the Committee include:

- Regular (at least annually) face to face contact with the student to evaluate his course of study and progress.
- Keeping the members of Presbytery informed of the current status of all students under care of Presbytery.
- Working with each student to schedule necessary exams at Presbytery meetings.
- Being in communication with the faculty at the Seminary to insure proper oversight of the student by the Seminary and successful completion of all coursework.
- For Presbytery examinations, assigning examiners, establishing exam parameters and facilitating communication between the student and the examiner.
- Guiding the student in his preparation for his Presbytery exams.
- Maintaining records and tracking the movement of the student through the training and examination process.

Responsibilities of the student's Session

Throughout the training and equipping process, a man should also be under the guidance of his own Session. His Session should take very seriously their task of oversight and direction of the man, both in his formal academic preparations and in his ongoing spiritual maturation and ministry skill development.

Effort should be made on the part of each elder in the student's Session to pray for the student's preparation. Communication should be maintained on a regular basis between the student and his Session.

The practical wisdom of the Session should be made readily available to the student as he faces the array of decisions presented to him. Particular areas of oversight to which the Session should remain attentive include: personal growth in godliness, time management, family relationships, ministry opportunities, financial provisions and health insurance.

Specific responsibilities of the student's Session include:

- Maintain spiritual oversight of the student's spiritual life, family relationships, and ministry development.
- Counsel the student regarding financial matters, including health insurance, scholarship funds and housing.
- Guide the student in his interaction with the Seminary faculty and the Presbytery

Responsibilities of the student

In addition to his seminary studies and ministry as a member in the Church, the student under care has the following responsibilities:

- Submit to the Candidates and Credentials Committee a written report of the year's activities and his future plans. This must include a timeline showing the student's progress and plan for future education and training.
- Request the Seminary to forward to the Presbytery an evaluation of his qualifications for ministry and statement of his academic standing.
- Seek the counsel and submit to the direction of the Candidates and Credentials Committee and of his Session.
- Facilitate communication between himself, the Candidates and Credentials Committee and his Session.

Section 6

The Purpose of Presbytery Examinations

The examination process is not simply a set of obligatory tests given to candidates after which Presbytery, by a majority vote, declares men fit for the ministry. Rather, Scripture asserts that two or three witnesses must confirm every matter. Witnesses by which ministry is confirmed include: graces, calling, gifts, knowledge and skills. Therefore, the examination process, from the first stage of being taken under care through ordination, is a set of procedures designed to evaluate a man's graces, calling, gifts, knowledge and skills.

Undershepherds must be covenant leaders. That is, they must be shepherds of the covenant community, equipped to lead men, women and families in full orbéd covenant life before God by example and by precept. Their lives must exhibit certain graces, natural and spiritual, supplied by God. They must also be clearly called by God to this work. They must have certain gifts given by God. They must have acquired the necessary knowledge to carry on the ministry and they must be able to minister with great skill.

Graces

Does the man's life exhibit the graces, both common and spiritual, necessary for pastoral service in the midst of God's covenant people? The student must give evidence of the fruit of the Spirit at work in his life in a variety of situations. He must "hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). However, in so doing, he must possess common courtesies and exhibit spiritual fruit in his dealings with peers, associates, and elders. He must have a good report among members of the church and with those outside the church. The examination process must reveal that these graces are present.

Call

Is the call of God to lead His covenant people upon the life of the student? The student may have a sense of call to the ministry. This personal sense of call must be confirmed by Presbytery in the examination process. Eventually, it must be confirmed by an actual call of a congregation on the student, which is the culmination of the training process.

Gifts

Has God given the requisite gifts to the man to fulfill pastoral ministry among God's covenant people? The student shows his ability to grasp the message of the Bible, Systematic Theology, and Church History. He displays his gifts before Presbytery in writing, exegesis, preaching, teaching, defending biblical truths, pastoring a flock and leadership. Presbytery must assure itself that the student has the requisite gifts for his proposed service.

Knowledge

Has the student acquired sufficient knowledge to carry on the ministry? There is a minimum core of knowledge, information and intellectual understanding that the student must possess. He is directly tested on his knowledge of the English Bible, Theology and Church History. But he is also tested less directly on his knowledge of human nature, how relationships work, leadership concepts and a general knowledge of many other things. The examination process must reveal how knowledgeable the student is and if he has a mindset to continue learning in the years ahead.

Skills

Has the student acquired sufficient skills to be ready for pastoral ministry? Has he demonstrated the ability to preach, to teach, to lead, to train others, to disciple, to evangelize, etc.? To what extent have his graces, calling, gifts and knowledge actually been skillfully applied to real life situations? Has it been sufficient enough to approve his seeking a call from a congregation? The examination process attempts to answer this question.

Theology of Ministry

As they prepare to serve the Lord, students are encouraged to articulate a Biblical "Theology of Ministry" that specifies how they intend to serve the Lord in the pastorate based on the mandates of Scripture lived out through their individual gifts and spiritual preparation by a sovereign Lord.

Summary

The examination process therefore takes the student through a series of crucial evaluations over a period of time. At the end of the process, both the Presbytery and the student must be sufficiently assured before God that the student does indeed have the graces, calling, gifts, knowledge and skills sufficient to begin pastoral ministry among God's people. If any of these areas is deficient or underdeveloped, Presbytery may prescribe further training before approving the man to seek a call to pastoral ministry.

Section 7

Licensure

There are two “approvals” that the Presbytery must give in order for a man to be authorized to seek and accept a call to a particular congregation in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The first is called “Eligibility to Preach” and the second is called “Eligibility for a Call.” The term applied to the outcome is “Licensed.” Sometimes the terms “Certification to Preach” and “Certification to Receive a Call” are also used. After each of these “approvals” is given, the student answers the Queries for Certification and the Presbytery offers a prayer officially certifying the man.

The following description of these stages of licensure and the required examinations for each is taken from the *Directory for Church Government*, chapter 3, section 2.c (“Preparation”):

Eligibility to Preach - First Step for Licensure

To become eligible to preach a student shall follow this procedure:

- a. A student shall become eligible for certification to preach any time after his first year [of seminary].
- b. The student shall request the Seminary to forward to his Presbytery an evaluation of his qualifications for ministry and statement of his academic standing.
- c. The candidate shall be examined by his Presbytery in constituted court in the following areas:
 - (1) Personal Godliness
 - (2) English Bible
 - (3) Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles
 - (4) The Preaching of an Expository Sermon
 - (5) The Presentation of a Paper on Church History (Presbytery is responsible to make these assignments which may correspond to assignments fulfilled in seminary.)
- d. The roll of Presbytery shall be called following each area of examination. Members shall respond with a vote of “I sustain” or “I do not sustain.” Any member may state the reasons for his vote or make appropriate comments.

- e. If the discourse and examinations are sustained by a two-thirds vote, an appointed elder shall ask the appropriate Queries for Certification to Preach.
- f. Presbytery shall vote by roll call whether to certify him a Candidate to Preach.
- g. If the candidate is approved by a two-thirds vote he shall sign the appropriate Queries for Certification.
- h. An appointed elder shall offer prayer officially certifying the candidate in the name of Christ, the King and Head of the Church.
- i. An appointed elder shall address the candidate with words of counsel as to his duties and the limitations which are as follows:
 - (1) He may not administer the sacraments.
 - (2) He may not perform marriages.
 - (3) He may not pronounce the benediction.
- j. Presbytery shall adjourn the meeting with prayer and benediction.
- k. The candidate shall be given a certificate of eligibility to preach.
- l. He remains under the care of his Presbytery and the jurisdiction of his Session.
- m. Certification ordinarily shall be for a term of five years and may be renewed at the discretion of Presbytery.

Eligibility for a Call - Final Step for Licensure

To become eligible for a call a student shall follow this procedure:

- a. A student shall be eligible for certification to receive a call at the end of his second year [of seminary].
- b. The student shall request of the Seminary to forward to his Presbytery an evaluation of his qualifications for ministry and a statement of his academic standing.
- c. The candidate shall be examined by his Presbytery in constituted Session in the following areas:
 - (1) Evidence of Pastoral and Evangelistic Gifts
 - (2) Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles
 - (3) Church History
 - (4) The Preaching of an Expository Sermon on an Assigned Topic
 - (5) The Presentation of an Exegesis Paper (Presbytery is responsible to make these assignments which may correspond to assignments fulfilled in seminary)
- d. The roll of Presbytery shall be called following each area of examination. Members shall respond with a vote of "I sustain" or "I do not sustain." Any member may state the reasons for his vote or make appropriate comments.
- e. If the discourse and examinations are sustained by a two-thirds vote, an appointed elder shall ask the appropriate Queries for Certification to Receive a Call.
- f. Presbytery shall vote by roll call whether to certify him a Candidate to Receive a Call. This certification must be made by a two-thirds vote.
- g. If the candidate is approved by a two-thirds vote he shall sign the appropriate queries.
- h. An appointed elder shall offer prayer officially certifying the candidate as being

- eligible for a call in the name of Christ, the King and Head of the Church.
- i. An appointed elder shall address the candidate with words of counsel as to his duties and the limitations which are as follows:
 - (1) He may not administer the sacraments.
 - (2) He may not perform marriages.
 - (3) He may not pronounce the benediction.
 - j. Presbytery shall adjourn the meeting with prayer and benediction.
 - k. The candidate shall be given a Certificate of Licensure.
 - l. He remains under the care of his Presbytery and the jurisdiction of his Session.
 - m. Certification ordinarily shall be for a term of five years and may be renewed at the discretion of Presbytery.

Section 8

Types of Examinations

The Reformed Presbyterian Church has sought to hold a high standard of spiritual and academic qualifications for its pastors. Thus, under normal circumstances, the church requires the completion of all examinations by each man in order to be licensed to receive a call from a Reformed Presbyterian congregation. Eleven examinations are administered by the Presbytery to determine the spiritual and academic preparation of the student. These exams fall into four categories: oral exams (5), written exams (1), papers (2), and preaching exams (3).

Each exam is conducted by an examiner who is a member of Presbytery and who is appointed by the Candidates and Credentials Committee.

It is the responsibility of the examiner to contact the student and inform him of the format and nature of the exam.

Oral exams

The oral examinations are usually conducted before the entire Presbytery. The examiner may or may not give questions to the student ahead of time.

The length of the oral exam is established by Presbytery. Normally, the appointed examiner questions the student for twenty minutes. This is followed by questions from other elders of Presbytery. On occasion, the Candidates & Credentials Committee may request greater time for certain exams. After the completion of the questioning, the Presbytery conducts a roll call vote during which each delegate may make relevant comments about the exam to the student. All exams must be sustained by a two-thirds vote.

Generally, the examiners are looking for short, precise answers allowing more ground to be covered. Students should project their voice, speaking clearly. Parameters of the exam should be carefully outlined by the examiner with the student well before the exam.

General hint: The use of Scripture and the Catechism is viewed as essential.

Written exams

Currently, a written exam in English Bible is required of each student. Occasionally a written exam in another subject will be given, if the Candidate and Credentials Committee believe this is necessary or helpful. Written exams will be proctored, often by the student's pastor, will have a limited time to be completed and may not be returned to the student.

The one(s) assigned to evaluate the written exam will give a report to the student and, if necessary, to the Presbytery. If presented to the Presbytery to meet a certain examination requirement (e.g. English Bible requirement), typically the Presbytery conducts a voice vote.

Preaching Exams

Preaching is not teaching but the proclaiming of the Word of God with authority. Students find this is more difficult in an examination setting than in a typical worship service. Yet it is necessary for the student to preach to the hearts of the men of Presbytery with authority.

Three sermons are required to be preached before the Presbytery. Students should preach for not more than 30 minutes and preferably about 25 minutes. Special care must be given to the type of sermon required to be preached each time.

After the completion of the sermon, the Presbytery conducts a roll call vote during which each delegate may make relevant comments about the sermon to the student. All sermons must be sustained by a two-thirds vote.

Papers

The subject of required papers will be assigned by the Candidates and Credentials Committee. Usually, the Committee is able to work with the student in determining the subject, occasionally assigning a paper that the student can also use for a seminary class. The Committee assigns at least two examiners to review the paper. The student must submit his paper to the examiners in a timely manner, usually at least one month before Presbytery meets. The paper is also made available to the other presbyters to review. Quality and length of papers should be of a graduate course level of scholarship, reflecting excellence in spelling, grammar and mechanics.

The examiners present to Presbytery a written evaluation and a recommendation as to the paper's acceptability. The Presbytery may ask questions of the student and/or give comments to him. After the discussion of the paper, the Presbytery usually conducts a voice vote on student papers.

Section 9

Examination Instructions

These are described in the order given in Section 7, above. With the exception of the “Evidence of Progress” sermon, the order in which they are actually taken is worked out by the Candidates and Credentials Committee in consultation with the student. (*See Appendix 2 for a chart the Presbytery uses to keep track of a student’s progress.*)

Evidence of Progress Sermon

At the end of a man’s first year (or equivalent) of seminary training, he is requested to demonstrate evidence of progress to the Presbytery. This is usually in the form of an expository sermon upon an assigned text from Scripture. The sermon is typically delivered during devotions at the regular meeting of Presbytery.

In addition, the student is to obtain a written evaluation from the Seminary which the student is attending and present that evaluation to the Presbytery. The evaluation is to analyze the student’s relationships, academic performance, and general preparation during the previous year.

If the student is sustained by a two-thirds majority of Presbytery in a role call vote then he is certified to continue pursuing seminary training.

Personal Godliness (*oral exam*)

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to reveal the life and character of the student under care and insure that the man aspiring to preach the word of God lives a life that is above reproach and is in accordance with the Scriptures.

What the student should expect

The personal godliness exam consists of two parts: the first is a private interview scheduled by the examiner with the student and his pastor (or elder); the second is a floor examination at presbytery.

Private interview — The examiner is responsible to schedule the private interview portion of the exam. He should contact the student to set up a time to meet; the interview can be conducted either by phone or in person. He should also contact the student's pastor to include him (or a designated elder) in the meeting, as well.

The interview should take place at least two weeks prior to the presbytery meeting at which the floor examination will take place. The purpose for this personal interview is to allow sensitive areas to be discussed privately and to protect the student from unnecessarily discussing delicate matters in a public setting. The examiner should ask questions about matters such as the following:

- **Moral purity** (e.g., struggles and victories with sensual temptations; any past immorality or sinful relationships, and how they have been resolved; struggles and victories with film, print, or internet pornography; etc.)
- **Personal finances** (e.g., past or present indebtedness; struggles and victories with material temptations in past or present business ventures or other financial dealings; etc.)
- **Marriage harmony**, if married (e.g., experiences that have tested the marriage and how the couple has grown together or apart through them; etc.)
- **Extended family relationships** (e.g., whether the student is carrying any emotional baggage or bitterness from unresolved conflicts with parents; other relevant matters of family history; etc.)
- Other sensitive matters of personal godliness.

The point of this private interview is not to be voyeuristic or unnecessarily prying. However, because these are areas in which pastors will be tested in the ministry, and because they are areas in which a pastor must be able, from a position of personal victory, to minister to others, it is part of presbytery's duty to the student and to Christ to examine the pastoral candidate's growth and spiritual health in these areas.

If any matters emerge in the interview which require further ministry to the student, the involvement of the student's pastor in the interview allows him to provide that follow up care. Meanwhile, the examiner may ask the Candidates and Credentials Committee to postpone the full presbytery exam (which can be done without any public report). If, however, no matters of concern emerge, the full presbytery examination will be scheduled.

Floor examination — The same examiner who conducted the private interview is expected to lead the floor examination, as well. Prior to addressing the student with questions, however, the examiner is expected to report to the presbytery that he and the student's pastor did meet privately with the student to discuss sensitive areas of finances and moral purity, and that he found the student's honesty and walk in those areas to be commendable. (It will strengthen the presbytery's confidence when the examiner is able to affirm that the student's pastor, as a second witness, was also able to participate in the interview.)

Questions posed in the floor examination should cover areas such as the following (cf. the biblical qualifications for elders in 1Tim 3 and Titus 1–2):

- Personal testimony, family background, personal history
- Personal walk with God (prayer life, meditation, time in God's word, Scripture memory, etc.)
- Marital status, family status
- Family life (support of wife in calling, family worship, etc.)
- Dealing with sin, issues of forgiveness, etc.
- Responsiveness to authority
- Relationships with other believers
- Hospitality
- Church life
- Other areas of personal godliness

What is expected of the student

Honest and forthright answers.

English Bible (*written exam*)

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to test the student's knowledge of the English Bible.

What the student should expect

The English Bible exam is conducted by a written examination. A proctor is assigned to administer the exam at a time and place to be arranged by the proctor with the student.

There are 107 questions (including multiple choice, short answer, paragraph essay, matching, and fill in the blank) presented in the following areas:

- The Law (15 pts)

- The Prophets (15 pts)
- The Psalms (20 pts)
- The Wisdom Literature (15 pts)
- The Gospels (25 pts)
- The Epistles (15 pts)
- The Book of Revelation (10 pts)
- Bible History (25 pts)
- Bible Personalities (20 pts)
- Bible Geography (15 pts)
- Bible Use (i.e., knowing key texts to address certain subjects) (25 pts)

The point of this exam is to assess familiarity with the Bible, so that the best way to prepare for the exam is to have spent time faithfully in thoughtful, regular devotional Bible study through all of Scripture. This is not an exam a student should cram for, although some extra reading and study prior to the test, to “freshen up” knowledge in all the different sections outlined about, is important preparation.

When the exam is completed, it is returned to the Candidates and Credentials Committee for grading. The Committee will report to the student, and to presbytery, whether the student has passed or failed the exam, and will also report in which of the 11 aforementioned areas the student showed strength or weakness. This information will give direction on the sections of Scripture to which the student should give further attention in ongoing study.

What is expected of the student

Students are required not to discuss this exam in the hearing of those who have not taken it. Due to the nature of the subject matter, this is a difficult exam to write, and it (or at least major parts of it) will be used for other students in the future.

Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles I (oral exam)

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to evaluate the theological understanding and to examine the orthodoxy, personal convictions and commitments of the student, especially his understanding of and commitment to the Scriptures and the subordinate standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. (See, “An Important Note on Theological Education” on pp. 15–19, above.) This exam is also designed to discover the student’s ability

to relate the truths of God and His word systematically and concisely to real issues which pastors face.

What the student should expect

Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles exams vary greatly depending on the examiner. This first exam concentrates more on factual knowledge and understanding of Systematic Theology and the special emphases of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The second exam will concentrate more on using the student's knowledge to address biblical and pastoral issues. The examiner will generally focus on areas of theology which the student has covered in his seminary training to date. Students should expect questions related to:

- Each of the loci of traditional systematic theology (God, Man, Christ, Sin, Salvation, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, etc.)
- The contents of the Westminster Confession of Faith
- The contents of the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms
- The contents of the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (and its supporting documents)
- The special emphases of the RPCNA (Mediatorial Kingship, Purity of worship, including a cappella singing and Psalmody, covenanting, secret societies, etc.)
- The different theological systems (e.g. Reformed, Dispensationalism, Covenant Theology, Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.)
- Historical developments of theology and theological errors

What is expected of the student

In this first theology exam, short factually loaded answers are preferred. Quote and refer to as much specific Scripture and as much of the subordinate standards as you can.

Students should have also read through the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America* in its entirety by this point in the examination process and have a general knowledge of its content. If the student has any points of question or disagreement with the denominational standards, he should raise these with the Candidates and Credentials Committee prior to this examination in order to be sure the examination allows those topics to be most helpfully address (see, "An Important Note on Theological Education" on pp. 15–19, above).

Expository Sermon

Purpose

The purpose of this sermon is first to preach to the hearts of the men of Presbytery. In the process, it is also to demonstrate the student's ability to proclaim the Word of God with accuracy, insight and authority such that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word is applied to the hearts and lives of those who hear.

The type of this sermon is to be “an expository sermon.” An expository sermon expounds the given text in its richness and depth on whatever subjects are in that text. It does not use that text as a springboard to search the rest of the Scripture on a particular topic, although appropriate cross references may be brought in to help understand and apply the text at hand.

The Presbytery recognizes three types of sermons:

- Expository sermon;
- Expository sermon on an assigned topic;
- Topical sermon.

An “expository sermon on an assigned topic” is a sermon on a topic that is rooted in the exposition of an assigned text as it relates to the topic. By “rooted in,” it is meant that a preacher preaches on the assigned topic, using the assigned text as his first and primary material for the topic; having first “rooted” his sermon in that text, he then draws in other texts to further expound, explain and illustrate the topic.

In contrast, an “Expository Sermon” will expound the assigned text in its richness and depth on many subjects whereas an “Expository Sermon on an Assigned Topic” will cover the insights on the assigned topic that are given in that particular text. This also is in contrast to a “topical sermon” which studies a topic from texts throughout the Scripture—taking a panoramic view of Scripture with regard to that topic. Such “topical sermons” are not included in Presbytery exams.

What the student should expect

The Candidates and Credentials Committee will assign a particular text for this sermon. They will often consult with the student, his pastor or his seminary professors as to an appropriate text. Students are encouraged to offer suggestions for this sermon to the Committee. If the student has, on some other occasion, preached a sermon that is not expository according to the definition above, it should not be offered to the Committee as a sugges-

tion for this required sermon.

Often students find preaching in an examination setting to be more difficult than in a typical worship service. Yet this is necessary for the student.

What is expected of the student

The student should select an appropriate psalm to be sung before he preaches and another one to be sung at the conclusion of his preaching. After being introduced to the Presbytery by the Committee or the Moderator, he should announce the first psalm. This is followed by the reading of appropriate Scripture which should include the assigned text (some may want to read passages from the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles) and prayer. After the sermon is concluded the student may again pray and announce a closing psalm.

As noted earlier, the length of the sermon should be not more than 30 minutes, preferably about 25 minutes. If the student is unsure of the nature of the preaching being required, he should ask the Candidates and Credentials Committee for clarification.

Church History Paper

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to test the student's ability to comprehend and interpret a given aspect of church history in a scholarly way and articulate his understanding in a paper that reflects excellence in research as well as communication skills. The assignment is often designed to expand a student's understanding of church history as it relates to the Reformed Presbyterian Church or as it relates to a particular need the Committee sees in the student.

What the student should expect

The Candidates and Credentials Committee shall assign the student a topic for a Church History Paper, along with a due date by which the completed paper is to be submitted to the Committee.

Topics may be assigned from any period of church history, but the assignment given will take into consideration what Church History classes the student has taken at seminary and any research papers which the student has already completed as part of those classes. It is generally preferred that the paper submitted to Presbytery for this exam is one which the student will have previously submitted for a grade at the seminary (or based on a seminary paper revised for Presbytery examination). This allows the Pres-

bytery to see the fruits of the student's seminary studies in this area, and it saves the student from having to produce a completely new paper for Presbytery. While the Committee is responsible to assign the topic, the student is at liberty to establish his thesis within the bounds of the given topic and the paper will be evaluated accordingly.

For the examination of the paper, the Committee will appoint two members of Presbytery as initial examiners. The Committee will provide the paper, upon its completion, to these examiners for their preliminary review ahead of the Presbytery meeting at which it is to be reported.

The examiners will review the paper according to the standards below (see "What is Expected of the Student," below) and will write a 1-2 page Examiners' Report, which will include their observations and critiques of the paper, as well as their recommendation to Presbytery either to sustain or not sustain the paper. This Examiners' Report will be submitted to the Committee and shared with the student ahead of the Presbytery meeting.

If the examiners' recommendation is to not sustain the paper, the paper will be returned to the student with guidance for improving it, and the paper will not be submitted to Presbytery for examination until the improvements are made and it is resubmitted for the examiners' review, again. (This will normally involve delaying the paper's presentation to Presbytery until a later meeting.) If, however, the examiners' recommendation is to sustain the paper, then both the Examiners' Report and the student's paper will be presented to Presbytery by the Committee for their review and vote.

What is expected of the student

The paper should be one which has been submitted for a seminary course in Church History at seminary, and which received a passing grade. Adjustments, improvements, and further changes to the paper in view of any comments from the grading professor or the student's own developing insight in the subject are certainly encouraged. It is not necessary to submit to Presbytery a paper in its exact form as submitted to the seminary, but it should ideally be a paper substantially based upon a seminary paper.

The student's paper will, therefore, be expected to meet the standard conventions of a seminary research paper as set by the seminary professor. If those standards set by the seminary vary in any significant way from the following minimum Presbytery expectations for this exam, the student should talk to the Committee about the differences promptly in order to resolve them. Otherwise, it is expected that the student's paper will meet the following, basic criteria:

- The paper should be 10-20 pages (not including title page, appendices, and bibliography), double-spaced, 12 point font, with standard margins.
- Students should establish a clear thesis that is within the boundaries established by the given topic, and the paper should affirm that thesis. The student should also provide some indication as to the implications for the church today which arise from understanding this history and the thesis he has established.
- Footnotes should be used rather than endnotes. Footnotes should be in a widely accepted standard format (e.g., Chicago style, SBL, Turabian, etc.) Proper credit is to be given for all quotations.
- Students should use primary and secondary sources as well as general histories.
- The paper should be written in proper English, with good grammar and correct spelling.

Normally, the student will be expected to attend the Presbytery meeting at which his paper is reported, and he should be prepared to answer questions from the floor about his paper.

Evidence of Pastoral and Evangelistic Gifts *(oral exam)*

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to discern the candidate's gifts, knowledge, skills and experience that will be important for him in effectively shepherding the flock of God. His gifts and abilities in proclaiming the Gospel in personal conversation as well as publicly will also be explored.

What the student should expect

The Pastoral and Evangelistic Gifts exam is a unique exam in that it requires more than an examination of the student's understanding of ministry; it also requires a presentation of evidence for how God has already used the man in past care and evangelistic work. Since it is inadvisable to ask the student to be the sole witness to the ways God has used him in the past (Prov 27:2), the examiner is also expected to talk to the student's pastor/Session about the student's fruitfulness in past ministry (and perhaps seminary professors or others in a position to see the student's ministry, as the examiner sees fit), prior to the scheduled presbytery examination.

At the beginning of the student's floor examination, the examiner should be prepared to present to presbytery a brief report of what he has learned

about the student's past experiences and fruitfulness in ministry. He may present this report in whatever way he sees fit (e.g., with a written page; a brief oral statement; by asking ahead of time for the student's pastor to speak about the student's past ministry fruitfulness; etc.) It will take some care (and time) for the examiner to do this preliminary preparation, but it is important for the presbytery to know about the student's past fruitfulness in ministry as this is one of the marks of God's gifting which presbytery wants to know about.

After providing a brief summary of the student's ministry experience, to date, the examiner will proceed to ask the student questions related to the following areas:

- Following up and discipling new believers.
- Equipping others for ministry
- Personal and family counseling
- Pastoral visitation
- Dealing with disagreements and conflicts
- Theology of ministry
- Scenarios for personal ministry (i.e., situations are explained and the student is asked how he would respond)
- Personal strengths and weaknesses in ministry
- The role of women in the life and ministry of the congregation
- Methods of presenting the Gospel to unbelievers
- Other areas related to pastoral and evangelistic work

What is expected of the student

Honest, forthright and concise answers. Students do well to answer using the Scripture and the subordinate standards of the Church.

Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles II (oral exam)

Purpose

The purpose of this second exam in Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles is to further evaluate the theological understanding and examine the orthodoxy of the student, especially his understanding of and commitment to the Scriptures and the subordinate standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. (See, "An Important Note on Theological Education" on pp. 15–19, above.)

This exam will concentrate more on using the student's knowledge to address biblical and pastoral issues. It is designed to discover his ability to

relate the truths of God and His word systematically and concisely to real issues which pastors face.

What the student should expect

Systematic Theology and Distinctive Principles exams vary greatly depending on the examiner. The examiner will generally focus on areas of theology the student has covered since his first examination, although any question may be asked. Students should expect questions related to:

- Current theological discussions in the Church and in our own denomination
- Practical questions of faith and life that pastors face on a day-to-day basis that are answered by the student's understanding of systematic theology.
- How to explain the special emphases of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to those who do not yet agree with us.

What is expected of the student

Students should answer questions using the Scripture and/or subordinate standards of the Church.

If the student has any points of question or disagreement with the denominational standards, he should raise these with the Candidates and Credentials Committee prior to this examination in order to be sure the examination allows those topics to be most helpfully address (see, "An Important Note on Theological Education" on pp. 15–19, above).

Church History (*oral exam*)

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to assess the student's understanding of church history, in particular his understanding of its significance for ministry and theology in the church today.

This is not a test of the student's ability to reproduce dates and facts of church history. It is certainly expected that the student has mastered important dates and facts of church history, and some of these will likely come up in this exam. However, presbytery expects seminary exams to test the student's competence in historical facts. The purpose of this examination by presbytery is to discern whether the student understands the theological and pastoral significance of those facts and the ramifications of events in history for ministry today.

What the student should expect

The student should expect questions of the following three types in the course of this exam:

General knowledge questions — The examiner will ask questions about specific persons, places, and events from church history. These questions should be designed, not to stump the student over facts, but to get a sense of the student’s grasp of the general flow of church history, the relationships between different eras, and the “big picture” of church history.

Depending on the chosen approach of the examiner, general knowledge questions may form the backbone of the exam. Some example questions of this category include:

- What is gnosticism?
- When was the First Council of Nicaea, and what was the primary issue addressed by it?
- Who was Augustine and what, in your estimation, was one of his most important and one of his most troubling influences upon the church?
- When was the Great Schism, and why did it happen?
- Who were some of the important forerunners of the Reformation?

Significance questions (asked about historical persons and events) — Often in connection with a general knowledge question, the examiner will ask the student for further reflection on the significance of a given person, idea, or event. Significance questions are designed to give the student an opportunity to show what he has come to understand about that person or event’s importance for the church’s faith and life.

Thoughtful answers to a handful of significance questions during the oral exam help assure presbytery that the student has been applying the same thoughtfulness to all areas of church history in his studies. Some example questions of this category include:

- How is the study of gnosticism in the early church relevant to ministry today?
- What was the significance of the Marrow Controversy?
- What were the key issues behind the Fundamentalist–Modernist Controversy?

Discussion questions (asked about historical topics) — In addition to questions about persons, places, and events of church history, the student should anticipate questions about key themes of church history, including ques-

tions about the student's views on the discipline of church history itself.

The examiner will need to exercise care not to veer into theology exam questions; nevertheless, it is helpful for presbytery to hear a student articulate the way key ideas took shape in the course of history. Some example questions of this category include:

- What is the value of church history?
- What are some misuses of church history?
- What role or influence will church history have in your preaching?
- What text on church history have you found most helpful, and why?

An oral church history exam will, by no means, cover all areas of church history. Furthermore, an examiner should find out ahead of time what classes on church history the student has covered and which era of church history he has not yet studied in seminary. The examiner will focus his questions primarily in the areas where the student has completed classes at seminary.

What is expected of the student

The student should avoid rambling answers that rehearse everything he has learned about a given person or event. Instead, he should listen carefully to the question, identify key aspects of what he has learned about the question topic relevant for his answer, and provide as concise an answer as possible. If the examiner wants more discussion, he will ask the student to elaborate further.

Additionally, the student should bear in mind that this exam is not designed to find out how many facts he has retained; hopefully seminary exams will ensure the student completes a rigorous mastery of all the key periods and events of church history. This exam is to assess the student's gifts and commitment to distill and fruitfully apply the lessons of history in the pastorate. Both the examiner and the student should keep this goal in mind as they frame their questions and their answers.

Expository Sermon on an Assigned Topic

Purpose

The purpose of this sermon is first to preach to the hearts of the men of Presbytery. In the process, it is also to demonstrate the student's ability to proclaim the Word of God with accuracy, insight and authority such that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word is applied to the hearts and lives of those who hear.

The type of this sermon is to be “an expository sermon on an assigned topic.” The Presbytery recognizes three types of sermons:

- Expository sermon;
- Expository sermon on an assigned topic;
- Topical sermon.

An “expository sermon on an assigned topic” is a sermon on a topic that is rooted in the exposition of an assigned text as it relates to the topic. By “rooted in,” it is meant that a preacher preaches on the assigned topic, using the assigned text as his first and primary material for the topic; having first “rooted” his sermon in that text, he then draws in other texts to further expound, explain and illustrate the topic.

In contrast, an “Expository Sermon” will expound the assigned text in its richness and depth on many subjects whereas an “Expository Sermon on an Assigned Topic” will cover the insights on the assigned topic that are given in that particular text. This also is in contrast to a “topical sermon” which studies a topic from texts throughout the Scripture—taking a panoramic view of Scripture with regard to that topic. Such “topical sermons” are not included in Presbytery exams.

What the student should expect

The Candidates and Credentials Committee will assign a particular text and topic for this sermon. The Committee will often consult with the student, his pastor or his seminary professors as to an appropriate text and topic. Students are encouraged to offer suggestions for this sermon to the Committee.

If the student has, on some other occasion, preached a sermon that is not expository according to the definition above, it should not be offered to the Committee as a suggestion for this required sermon.

Often students find preaching in an examination setting to be more difficult than in a typical worship service. Yet this is necessary for the student.

What is expected of the student

The student should select an appropriate psalm to be sung before he preaches and another one to be sung at the conclusion of his preaching. After being introduced to the Presbytery by the Committee or the Moderator, he should announce the first psalm. This is followed by the reading of appropriate Scripture which should include the assigned text (some may want to read passages from the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles)

and prayer. After the sermon is concluded the student may again pray and announce a closing psalm.

As noted earlier, the length of the sermon should be not more than 30 minutes, preferably about 25 minutes. If the student is unsure of the nature of the preaching being required, he should ask the Candidates and Credentials Committee for clarification.

Exegesis Paper

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to evaluate the student's ability to exegete and interpret a given Biblical text in a scholarly way and articulate his understanding in a paper that reflects excellence in research as well as communication skills. It is then to demonstrate his ability to use his exegesis as the basis for a sermon or series of sermons.

What the student should expect

The Candidates and Credentials Committee shall assign the student a Scripture text along with a due date by which the completed paper is to be submitted to the Committee.

Texts may be assigned from either the Old or New Testaments, but the assignment given will take into consideration what language classes the student has taken at seminary thus far, and any exegesis papers which the student has already completed as part of those classes. It is generally preferred that the paper submitted to Presbytery for this exam is one which the student will have previously submitted for a grade at the seminary (or based on a seminary paper revised for Presbytery examination). This allows the Presbytery to see the fruits of the student's seminary studies in this area, and it saves the student from having to produce a completely new paper for Presbytery.

For the examination of the paper, the Committee will appoint two members of Presbytery as initial examiners. The Committee will provide the paper, upon its completion, to these examiners for their preliminary review ahead of the Presbytery meeting at which it is to be reported. The examiners will review the paper according to the standards below (see "What is Expected of the Student," below) and will write a 1-2 page Examiners' Report, which will include their observations and critiques of the paper, as well as their recommendation to Presbytery either to sustain or not sustain the paper. This Examiners' Report will be submitted to the Committee and shared

with the student ahead of the Presbytery meeting.

If the examiners' recommendation is to not sustain the paper, the paper will be returned to the student with guidance for improving it, and the paper will not be submitted to Presbytery for examination until the improvements are made and it is resubmitted for the examiners' review, again. (This will normally involve delaying the paper's presentation to Presbytery until a later meeting.) If, however, the examiners' recommendation is to sustain the paper, then both the Examiners' Report and the student's paper will be presented to Presbytery by the Committee for their review and vote.

What is expected of the student

The paper should ideally be one which has been submitted for a seminary course in Hebrew or Greek exegesis at seminary, and which received a passing grade. Adjustments, improvements, and further changes to the paper in view of any comments from the grading professor or the student's own developing insight in the passage are certainly encouraged. It is not necessary to submit to Presbytery a paper in its exact form as submitted to the seminary, but it should ideally be a paper substantially based upon a seminary paper.

The student's paper will, therefore, be expected to meet the standard conventions of a seminary exegesis paper as set by the seminary professor. If those standards set by the seminary vary in any significant way from the following minimum Presbytery expectations for this exam, the student should talk to the Committee about the differences promptly in order to resolve them. It is expected that the student's paper will include, at minimum, the following criteria:

- The paper should be not more than 40 pages (not including title page, appendices, and bibliography), in a 12 point font with standard margins.
- The paper should include an analysis of the historical context, dating, and authorship of the passage.
- The paper should include textual analysis, showing an ability to use the critical apparatus and to draw well reasoned conclusions between variant readings.
- The paper should include the student's own translation of the text, word studies of key terms, and a verse-by-verse analysis of the text that shows the student's understanding of morphology, idioms, metaphors, plays on words, key ideas in the text, etc.

- The paper should provide some kind of outline, diagramming, structural analysis, and/or literary analysis that demonstrates the overall flow of the text and makes explicit the key theme (or themes) of the passage.
- The paper should include a theological analysis, paying attention to key theological issues in the church which the text addresses and what doctrines of the faith the passage informs.
- The paper should include a meditation, sermon outline, statement of propositions with development, or other summary of the work that shows the student's ability to apply the fruits of exegesis to the edification of the church.
- Footnotes should be used rather than endnotes. Footnotes should be in a widely accepted standard format (e.g., Chicago style, SBL, Turabian, etc.) Proper credit is to be given for all quotations.

Normally, the student will be expected to attend the Presbytery meeting at which his paper is reported, and he should be prepared to answer questions from the floor about his paper.

Section 10

The Call of a Congregation

Once the student has been “Licensed to Receive a Call”, he is eligible to receive a call from a congregation to be their pastor.

Seeking a Call and Candidating

After being “Certified to Preach” (see Section 7, above) a student may begin preaching in congregations to which he is invited. This often includes congregations who do not have a settled pastor. Although he cannot be an “official candidate” at this point, he is urged to get to know the church and to make himself available for the church to get to know him.

Once the student has been “Licensed to Receive a Call”, he can then be an “official candidate”.

Men seeking a call are urged to work closely with the Candidates and Credentials Committee and with their own Session in planning how to find the Lord’s place for them to serve. *(See Appendix 3 for “How to Receive Pastoral Candidates.” This gives suggestions as to how congregations seeking a pastor should relate to pastoral candidates.)*

Receiving and Processing a Call

When a congregation is ready to issue a call to a pastoral candidate, they meet as a congregation to vote. If the congregation agrees on a call, the pastoral candidate is notified immediately. The congregation is given 2 weeks for everyone who wishes to sign the call, after which it is sent to the Presbytery for review and forwarding.

The following instructions for processing a call is taken from the *Book of Church Government*, chapter 3, section 2.D.6:

A call shall be processed by the Presbytery in the following manner:

- a. Presbytery, after receiving a call, shall determine whether the call was made in accordance with the law and order of the Church.

- b. Presbytery shall sustain it as a regular call and forward it to the teaching elder-elect within the Presbytery or the Presbytery holding the credentials of the teaching elder-elect.
- c. Presbytery may decline to forward the call for any of the following reasons:
 - (1) The refusal of a considerable minority to sign the call.
 - (2) Failure to make suitable financial arrangements.
 - (3) A conviction on the Presbytery's part that establishing the relationship would not be wise.
- d. If Presbytery does not sustain a call, reasons shall be recorded in the minutes, the candidate shall be notified, the call returned to the congregation and a copy of the minutes stating the reason(s) shall go to both the candidate and the congregation.
- e. If a call is addressed to a teaching elder of a congregation within the Presbytery, the interest of that congregation shall be considered carefully.
- f. A Presbytery which is in Session may present a call immediately to a teaching elder whose credentials are held by the Presbytery or to a student under its care, if the person is present.
- g. The teaching elder-elect may either accept or decline the call or ask for more time to consider it.
- h. If the call is rejected, the teaching elder-elect shall notify the congregation and the Presbytery in writing.
 - i. If the call is accepted, Presbytery shall take steps toward ordination and or installation.
 - j. If the teaching elder-elect is not present, Presbytery shall forward the call to him.
- k. Upon reception of the call from his Presbytery, the teaching elder-elect shall inform the congregation and the Presbytery of his decision within two weeks.
 - l. A call may not be presented by a Presbytery other than the one having oversight of the one called.
- m. When the person called is from a congregation within another Presbytery. The Presbytery of the congregation making the call, having approved it, shall forward it to the other Presbytery for evaluation and presentation.
- n. If the call is accepted the credentials of the person called shall be transferred to the Presbytery of the congregation making the call.
- o. That Presbytery shall take necessary steps toward ordination and or installation.

Section 11

Ordination Examinations

Once a call has been accepted by a candidate, the Candidates and Credentials Committee makes arrangements for the ordination exams of the man. The policy of this Presbytery is that a man shall not take up residence in the congregation to which he has been called until his ordination exams are successfully completed. The only exception to this is if the pastor-elect is already a member of the congregation to which he has been called.

A special meeting of Presbytery is normally called to conduct the ordination exams. After the exams have been successfully completed, the Presbytery will make arrangements for the pastor-elect's ordination and installation.

Three exams are required. They must each be sustained by a two-thirds vote of the Presbytery.

A sermon preached on an assigned portion of Scripture

Purpose

The purpose of this sermon is first to preach to the hearts of the men of Presbytery. In the process, it is also to demonstrate the pastor-elect's ability to proclaim the Word of God with accuracy, insight and authority such that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word is applied to the hearts and lives of those who hear.

The type of this sermon is to be an expository sermon on an assigned portion of Scripture. This is the same as an "Expository Sermon" as described in Section 9, above.

What the pastor-elect should expect

The Candidates and Credentials Committee will assign a particular text for this sermon. The Committee will often consult with the pastor-elect, his pastor or his seminary professors as to an appropriate text and topic. The pastor-elect is encouraged to offer suggestions for this sermon to the Com-

mittee. If the pastor-elect has, on some other occasion, preached a sermon that is not expository according to the definition above, it should not be offered to the Committee as a suggestion for this required sermon.

What is expected of the pastor-elect

The pastor-elect should select an appropriate psalm to be sung before he preaches and another one to be sung at the conclusion of his preaching. After being introduced to the Presbytery by the Committee or the Moderator, he should announce the first psalm. This is followed by the reading of appropriate Scripture which should include the assigned text (some may want to read passages from the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles) and prayer. After the sermon is concluded the pastor-elect may again pray and announce the closing psalm.

As noted earlier, the length of the sermon should be not more than 30 minutes, preferably about 25 minutes.

Personal Godliness

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to examine once more the life and character of the pastor-elect to insure that the man aspiring to the office of teaching elder is above reproach.

What the pastor-elect should expect

Personal godliness exams vary greatly depending on the examiner. It is the responsibility of the examiner to contact the pastor-elect and inform him of the format and nature of the exam. In this exam, any question related to the personal life and development of the pastor-elect may be asked. Attention usually is given to Biblical passages in Timothy and Titus dealing with qualifications for elders. The examiner will be encouraged to have a personal interview with the pastor-elect beforehand in which he may ask more personal questions, especially regarding sexual purity, family history, the wife's support of the man's call, financial debt and other grievous sin in the pastor-elect's past.

What is expected of the pastor-elect

Honest and forthright answers.

Soundness in the Faith and Commitment to the Testimony of the RP Church

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to evaluate once more the theological understanding and convictions of the pastor-elect to be sure they are sufficient to become a teaching elder. It is also to determine his level of commitment to those particular teachings emphasized by the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

What the pastor-elect should expect

Soundness in the Faith exams can vary greatly depending on the examiner. Typically, the pastor-elect will not be given any examination questions ahead of time. Special attention will usually be given to the content of the ordination vows.

The pastor-elect should be prepared to answer questions related to the following topics:

- The ordination vows
- The subordinate standards of the Church

What is expected of the pastor-elect

Honest and forthright answers.

If the pastor-elect has any reservations about or exceptions to the subordinate standards, he should declare them at this point. (See, “An Important Note on Theological Education” on pp. 15–19, above.)

Section 12

Ordination and Installation

After the ordination exams are completed successfully, the Presbytery, often working through its Ad Interim Commission, works out the details of the ordination and installation service. This is done in close cooperation with the congregation to which the pastor-elect is called and the pastor-elect himself.

This service is conducted by the Presbytery in constituted court. The current moderator of the Presbytery would normally preside. Men will be assigned for the following responsibilities in the service:

- Ordination Sermon
- Prayer of Ordination and Installation
- Charge to the New Pastor
- Charge to the Congregation

Conclusion

The pastor-teaching ministry is an honored and learned profession. The elder who rules well is worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching (I Timothy 5:17). God calls men to labor within His Church, and He pours out grace upon grace that they might proclaim His truth and disciple His people.

O, that God may call more men to this noble service within His kingdom! May these men be equipped with the vision to see the Kingdom of Christ advanced, the godly character to withstand the wiles of the evil one, and the courage to evangelize and disciple the people whom God is continuing to call from every nation under heaven!

God has blessed His Church with leaders. He has extended the ministry of His Church to every nation under heaven. May God raise up men in the Church to pastor and to teach and to live the Word of God with boldness!

Recommended Reading

- *The Elder's Handbook: A Practical Guide for Church Leaders* by Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster (Christian Library Press: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979)
- *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter - first published 1656 (reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust: Carlisle, PA, 1997)
- *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America* (esp. chapter #3 of the Directory for Church Government)
- *The Preacher and Preaching* by Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (ed.) (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ, 1986)
- *Biblical Preaching*, 2d. ed.: by Haddon W. Robinson
- *Lectures in Pastoral Theology* by R. J. George in 3 volumes

Appendix 1

Guidelines for Internships

The following guidelines were prepared by Dr. Jerry O'Neill, President and Professor of Pastoral Theology at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

The Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary is a graduate professional institution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. The church has commissioned the Seminary with the primary purpose of preparing men to serve as pastors of congregations in the church. As part of that preparation, the Seminary requires successful completion of its internship program.

Students at the Seminary, as well as congregations involved in the internship program, are asked to recognize the crucial importance of such experiences in the preparation of men for the ministry.

Since the basic objective of the internship program is training men for ministry, it is not primarily designed to provide a part-time worker for a congregation, though this will be one of its byproducts. It is important that congregations which participate in this program conceive of their role as contributing to the building of the church by helping students in their preparation. It is also important that the student recognize his place in contributing to the life and ministry of that congregation.

The Internship Requirements of the Seminary

Students are required to have at least one internship under the supervision of a pastor and Session of a congregation in order to meet course requirements for graduation from the Seminary.

Following the Junior or Middler year, students are required to serve in a summer internship to which they may be appointed by mutual agreement between the pastor and Session of the congregation, and the professor of Pastoral Theology. In making such plans for internship, students should seek counsel from their own Session, and the Committee for Students Un-

der Care of their Presbytery. This summer internship shall cover a period of at least ten weeks during which time the student shall be available to give full-time service. This summer internship, if completed satisfactorily, will carry two quarter-hour credits and meet the graduation requirements. It is recommended that a second summer also be devoted to internship, and credit may be given upon the same basis if the internship is arranged under a different pastor and Session.

Middlers or Seniors also may serve during the academic year in churches to which they are appointed by mutual agreement between the pastor and Session of a local congregation, and the professor of Pastoral Theology. Similarly, in making such plans for internship, students should seek counsel from their own Session and the Committee for Students Under Care of their Presbytery. This internship shall involve the intern in approximately 10 hours per week of service in the congregation including time on the Lord's Day. One academic year of such service, if satisfactory, will carry two quarter-hour credits, and may meet graduation requirements if summer internship cannot be arranged. Where denominational standards require longer internships, mutual arrangements may be made

Placement of the Internship

Qualified students desiring summer internships should indicate that desire to the professor of Pastoral Theology before February 1. Congregations desiring student interns should contact the Professor of Pastoral Theology before March 1. If no appropriate congregation contacts the Seminary, then the Professor of Pastoral Theology will contact the student's Presbytery and/or pastor to explore the possibility of securing a pastor who will be able to supervise the student's summer internship. If a summer internship seems to be advisable, the professor of Pastoral Theology will consult with the pastor regarding his responsibilities in supervising and evaluating the intern. He will also consult with the intern regarding his responsibilities and relationships in working with the pastor and Session. "Guidelines for Internships for Seminary Students" will be discussed both with the pastor and the intern.

A Covenant (see attached copy) between the intern and the church to which he has been assigned should be drawn up before the intern begins his field-work. This should clearly set forth an overview of the church's program including a job description for the intern detailing his specific responsibilities. Copies of this covenant should be kept in the hands of the pastor,

the intern, and the professor of Pastoral Theology. Changes in the covenant may be made by mutual consent of the pastor and intern; the professor of Pastoral Theology should be notified concerning any changes of responsibility.

Financial arrangements will be up to the congregation and/or the Presbytery. These should be included in the above covenant. Reformed Presbyterian congregations should contact the Seminary to make arrangements for supplemental grants which are available from the Seminary for summer internships. (In summer internships, congregations and presbyteries are reminded that in addition to travel and living expenses seminary students are dependent upon summer income to help with expenses during the academic year.)

The Status of the Intern

The intern is not an “assistant pastor” nor a “pastor’s assistant”. He is a learner and a worker. He is to watch every phase of the church’s activity and life, and to learn from them. He is to accept each responsibility mutually agreed upon in the covenant, and is to give of himself humbly, freely, and fully to that task.

While during the course of the program, the intern may preach or take other responsibilities during the pastor’s absence, the main thrust of the internship is to be an involvement with the pastor in being “with him” and “walking-through” what a pastor does and learning from the pastor’s experience and counsel.

The intern is responsible only to the pastor and Session for the assignment of responsibilities. Requests for his services from other people or organizations of the congregation should be cleared through the Session.

Suggested Types of Learning Experiences for the Intern

Work Experiences

- **Teaching** — He may be asked to teach a class in Church School or Vacation Bible School, or to lead a Bible study group at the church or in a home.
- **Assisting in the Worship Service** — He may take such parts of the service as the pastor assigns, such as: presiding for a portion of the service, reading Scripture, leading in a responsive reading, leading in prayer, presenting a Psalm meditation, and preaching. He is always to be conscious that his work is under the oversight of the Session.

- **Visitation** — At the discretion of the pastor, he should be asked to accompany the pastor in making some pastoral calls. The pastor should make it clear to the intern whether he is merely to observe what is being done or to participate in the conversation.
- **Youth Work** — He may be called upon to serve as an assistant or associate director or sponsor of a youth group. This may include social or recreational responsibilities during the week as well as group participation on the Lord's Day.
- **Summer Conference** — Where a summer conference takes place during the time of the internship program, and where the congregation actively participates in the conference, the intern may be used as a worker at the conference as part of his internship if his responsibilities before and at the conference are approved by the pastor and Session.
- **Music** — If he has musical talents he may be asked to sing in the choir or to help in the leadership of praise.
- **Evangelism** — It is hoped that the church will provide opportunities for the intern in evangelistic outreach. He may be asked to go with the pastor or elders in visiting those who have shown some response to the Gospel. He may be asked to participate in various ways of presenting the Gospel to the community. He may be asked to give his testimony to the congregation or to other groups.

Observation Experiences

- At the discretion of the pastor and Session, the intern may be given the opportunity to visit different departments and classes of the church school to observe procedures and to study organization.
- He may be permitted to sit in and observe the meetings of the Session, the Board of Deacons, the Christian Education Committee, and other organizations of the church at times determined by the Session in order that he may gain some understanding and experience in these areas.

Evaluation Experience

- At the close of the internship program, the intern is to report on his internship in writing to the Professor of Pastoral Theology for, citing things he has accomplished and the value of the program in his development in ministry.
- He is also to meet with the Professor of Pastoral Theology for debriefing after his report and the report of the pastor/Session have been received.

Guidelines for the Pastor in Supervision of the Intern

- Take time to be together with the intern. Our Lord trained His disciples by having them “with Him”. You are the intern’s model, instructor and counselor.
- Take time to pray together. If possible, schedule a time of prayer each day. Take time to discuss what you need to pray about. Include past failures as well as future opportunities. Probably more than anything else this will open your life and ministry to the intern.
- Spell out very precisely what you expect the intern to do. Don’t assume anything. If there are areas of failure, this is the first place to check out. Have you clearly communicated what you expect? You might well ask him to repeat back to you what he perceives his work to be.
- Give him feedback. Let him know where he is doing well. Tell him if he is not getting the job done. Let him know the same day if possible; don’t hold back your counsel for several days or weeks. He may be reinforcing his mistakes.
- You are a supervisor. He is not on his own. You may see some areas where he can be entrusted with much responsibility, but even in those areas you are to hold the reins. For his good, either you or someone authorized by you should be in a position to evaluate his work.
- A written evaluation of the intern’s work should be prepared and mailed to the Seminary by the date determined in the Internship Covenant. This should take into consideration the intern’s faithfulness, perseverance, punctuality, appearance, rapport with people, reaction to stress, responsiveness to suggestions, and other general attitudes. It should also include your evaluation of his gifts in teaching and preaching, and should give your overall impression of his work in your congregation and of his prospects as a pastor.
- We encourage you to share this evaluation with the intern. It will be kept confidentially in his file here; this file will not be accessible to anyone but the faculty and the student himself. Guide him in evaluating his own strengths and weaknesses; help him to deal with them recognizing both God’s sovereignty and his own responsibility.

Guidelines for the Intern

Please don’t:

- Over-rate your position in the congregation.
- Under-rate what God can do with a humble, willing, and energetic

young man who is committed to Christ as Lord.

- Talk about the pastor or the people of the church where you serve except in appreciation.
- Be late. Plan to arrive at each appointment at least 10 minutes early. Before worship services or meetings, arrive early and make yourself available to the pastor or to the group you were appointed to serve.
- Be a kill-joy. Let your joy in Christ show on your face. Make the people glad that you are there. Learn to fit in with the plans of others, and be happy to do so.

Please do:

- Bring to every task, however trivial it may seem, the very best preparation of which you are capable.
- Make careful preparation for all assignments to lead and/or to speak. Be sensitive to the time-frame allotted to you.
- Give careful attention to prayer in public, thinking through beforehand both the content and language to be used in prayer.
- Prepare carefully for the public reading of Scripture by looking up and mastering the pronunciation of proper names and all difficult words. Rehearse the reading by reading it aloud, so that you can give as much expression as possible.
- Maintain personal cleanliness and neatness of appearance. In the pulpit, particularly, your appearance should be a complement, not a contrast, to the appearance of the pastor.
- Be a courteous and friendly guest when you are in people's homes. Express your appreciation heartily.
- See every situation as an opportunity to minister and to gain maturity in ministry. Even at times when you may feel frustrated or neglected or imposed upon, be ready to ask and respond to the question, "What is God teaching me through this?"
- Accept the counsel and criticism of the pastor and Session graciously. Recognize that God has given those elders experience and wisdom from which you can learn.
- Claim opportunities to build the church and not tear it down. Some people may see you as a person to whom they can express their pet gripes. You may be tempted to agree with them or to give adverse criticism of the pastor or the church. You may be tempted to feel that you have all the answers to their problems. If you are burdened as you see needs, discuss them with the pastor and Session; feel free to give con-

structive criticism to them, but refrain from tearing down the people or the principles of the church among the people. Christ calls you to build His church.

Sample Pastoral Internship Covenant **Student's Name • Dates**

Our Commitment

- To further develop your heart, wisdom, character and skills to equip you for pastoral ministry
- To expose you to the daily life and ministry of the pastorate
- To deepen your vision, convictions and skills for evangelism and disciple-making ministry in the church
- To give you opportunities to lead the people of God
- To provide helpful critique and evaluation in your ministry, both of the Word of God and to the people of God
- To make this experience helpful toward preparation for the ministry and in accordance with the requirements of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- To provide adequate room and board

Your Responsibilities

- To meet with the pastor weekly
- To be available to accompany the pastor on ministry activities
- To learn how to balance faithfully your work and church responsibilities with your family
- To help the congregation be more involved in community outreach
- To attend Session meetings and perhaps Presbytery and Synod

Appendix 2

Student Examination Record (Sample)

GLGP Student Chart: **Student Name**

	Completed	Examiner/Proctor	Comments
Taken under care		_____	
Seminary begun			

Evidence of Progress sermon		_____	
Seminary: First year done			

Personal Godliness exam			
English Bible exam (<i>written</i>)			
Theology & Distinctives I exam			
Expository Sermon I — <i>assigned text</i>		_____	
Church History paper			
Licensure to preach			
Seminary: Second year done			

Pastoral & Evangelistic Gifts exam			
Theology & Distinctives II exam			
Church History exam			
Expository Sermon II — <i>assigned topic</i>		_____	
Exegesis paper			
Licensure to receive a call			
Seminary: MDiv awarded			

Internships		_____	
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O R D I N A T I O N E X A M S			
Expository Sermon — <i>assigned text</i>		_____	
Personal Godliness exam			
Soundness in the Faith & Testimony			

Appendix 3

How to Receive Pastoral Candidates

The following guidelines were prepared by the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary for the assistance of congregations preparing to host a candidate for the pastorate.

The Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in response to a perceived need, has drafted the following guidelines for congregations searching for a pastor. In particular, our goal is to help congregations with vacant pulpits in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America interact properly with potential pastoral candidates, especially those who are students at the Seminary. Lack of communication between the congregation and pastoral candidates, at least as perceived by the candidates, and the occasional failure of congregations to understand the unique needs of seminarians, have led us to set forth in writing suggestions for improving the process of candidating.

It perhaps does not need to be said, but we want to say up front that these suggestions are only that, i.e., suggestions. Congregations obviously have the right to do things as they deem best, but many congregations do not go through this process very often and simply have not thought about the best way to do things. With these understandings, then, we offer these suggestions:

Correspondence before the candidate's visit

- Have one person in charge of all communication with the prospective candidate. This person should be a member of the Session or the search committee and could also have the authority to arrange details of the visit.
- Clearly express how the congregation plans to arrange transportation for the visit. Is the candidate to fly? If so, who is to purchase the ticket(s), and how is it to be paid for? Who will meet the candidate at the airport?

- Let the candidate know where he and his family (when asked to accompany him) will be staying. Send accurate directions.
- Find out when the candidate hopes to arrive and make sure that meal plans are clearly communicated.
- Make sure that the candidate knows in advance what your expectations are for his time with you. Will he preach once or twice? Will he preside during the worship service(s), or will he just preach? Will he lead a church school discussion? Will there be a time of questions and answers? Will he be expected to share his philosophy of ministry? Should his family accompany him?

Hosting the candidate

- If possible, have a written schedule for the candidate's stay in your city that will include dates, times, places, and responsibilities.
- When possible, provide a community information packet, including a local map.
- Provide directions to the various places the candidate will be expected to visit.
- Provide a tour of the community and make appropriate introductions to people that the candidate should meet.
- Have the candidate in a number of different homes for meals and/or fellowship, but remember that he may desire some time alone for prayer and preparation, especially in the time immediately prior to preaching.

Correspondence following the candidate's visit

- Contact the candidate soon after his visit, by email or telephone, to discuss any feedback and inform him of what he might expect in the future. If deemed appropriate, inform the candidate of the informal reaction to his recent ministry and discuss possible actions forthcoming (invite more candidates, have a congregational meeting to make out a call, or have an informal straw vote to determine if the congregation is ready to proceed with a call).
- If the process of selecting a pastor continues for a period of months after the candidate's visit, the contact person should occasionally update the candidate on the status of the search process.
- If and when the candidate is no longer under serious consideration by a congregation, the contact person should graciously thank the candidate for his previous visit and indicate that at least for the present time

the congregation plans to follow another path in its pastoral search.

Timing

- Take as much time as is necessary to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, ministry opportunities and threats to the congregation as it goes through the time of pastoral transition. Take the necessary time to address issues that need to be addressed before calling a new pastor.
- All men who are licensed to preach may candidate at any time. However, a man may not be called until his Presbytery certifies him eligible to receive a call.
- Remember that most seminarians finish their course work in the month of May. Many must move from apartments by the middle of the summer. If at all possible, congregations should plan their search process so that seminary graduates will be aware prior to their graduation of open doors for ministry.

Further observations

- Some congregations who have heard a number of different candidates find it very difficult to reach a consensus, or to obtain a two-thirds majority vote for any one man. To avoid this potential difficulty, some congregations seek to screen candidates prior to inviting them to visit, asking only the leading candidate to preach for the congregation. This puts great responsibility in the hands of the search committee (a potential problem in itself), but it allows a congregation to consider one man at a time. If the congregation is satisfied with the candidate, it can proceed immediately to extend a call to him.
- Especially when the search committee assumes significant responsibility (as discussed in the preceding paragraph, for example), congregations may want to use the Session as the search committee to avoid power struggles or delays.

