

The Church and Christian Educators

The certification process outlined in this handbook attempts to faithfully fulfill the requirements for preparation, examination, and admission to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the certified Christian educator as described in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As you read and use it, you will note that the Form of Government, one of the sections of the Book of Order, addresses the ministry of the “certified Christian educator.” It is the constitutional provision for the Certified Christian Educator and the Certified Associate Christian Educator. The entry level for certification, Enrolled Educational Assistant, is not reflected in the Form of Government. It is an entry level whereby educators who hold no degree may enter the process and work toward certification if they so choose, and is a way the church recognizes the gifts and ministries of persons while encouraging them in their continuing education. As such, they are steps in the ongoing process of lifetime learning common to all educators.

The constitutional provisions describing the preparation, examination, and rights of certified Christian educators are found in chapter fourteen of the Form of Government. The relevant sections are as follows:

G-14.0710 Christian Educators

Christian educators are persons called by God to a ministry of education who demonstrate their faith in and love for Jesus Christ, are dedicated to the life of faith and are serious in purpose, honest in character, and joyful in service. Christian educators serving particular congregations are accountable to the session and under the supervision of the pastor, sharing with them the responsibility of providing for the spiritual growth of members for their ministry, teaching the Bible, recommending curriculum materials and resources, training and supporting lay workers, planning and administering the educational program of their congregations, and other tasks.

G-14.0711 Training

It is expected that Christian educators be persons with skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, human development, religious educational theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or prepare to meet, the accrediting requirements defined in this section.

G-14.0720 Certification for Christian Educators

In order to provide effective guidance for educational ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the General Assembly shall offer a handbook containing the training and continuing education process for Christian Educators, which shall be administered and certification granted by the Educator Certification Council on behalf of the General Assembly Council. The handbook shall also provide suggested models for support and accountability that synods and presbyteries may adopt for their own use or modify to fit local circumstances.

G-14.0721 Accrediting Process

The handbook shall provide an accrediting process that evaluates the educator’s academic

preparation and work experience and examines competency in the following knowledge and skill areas:

- Biblical Interpretation
- Reformed Theology
- Human Development
- Religious Education Theory and Practice
- Polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Program and Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Worship and Sacraments

G-14.0722 Educator Certification Council

The Educator Certification Council shall establish certification standards, designate Educator Certification Advisors in consultation with presbyteries, evaluate certification examinations, and grant certificates and report to the General Assembly Council.

G-14.0730 Presbytery and Certified Christian Educators

The presbytery shall

- a. support the certification process by encouraging educators to seek certification, providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor, and encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification;
- b. provide the following support to the certified Christian educators: service of recognition that shall include the constitutional questions at W-4.4003 (G-11.0103n); establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits (G-11.0103n); and access to the committee on ministry (G-11.0503); and
- c. grant the privilege of the floor to the certified Christian educator at all its meetings with voice only, and, in the case of certified Christian educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b. (G-11.0407)

G-14.0731 Service of Recognition

When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of an applicant for a certified education position in ministry in the church, a service of recognition shall be provided that shall include the constitutional questions (W-4.4003), using these words for Question i: Will you be a faithful certified Christian educator, teaching faith and caring for people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

G-14.0732 Duty to Report

Certified Christian educators shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication; or (2) he or she reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.