

# CANDIDATE'S HANDBOOK FOR ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS

PREPARED BY: PRESBYTERIES' COOPERATIVE COMMITTEE  
ON EXAMINATION FOR CANDIDATES

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# INTRODUCTION

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) administers Ordination Examinations as a reasonably uniform (standard) process for determining candidates' readiness for ministry. An overture from the Presbytery of San Francisco in 1963 became a provision of the constitution of the former UPCUSA in 1965. Examinations have been given continuously (in the UPCUSA stream) since 1967. Exams were administered nationally, and elders and ministers who were elected by their Presbyteries graded the exams.

The 115th General Assembly (1975) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States called for standard written examinations for ordination to begin effective January 1, 1977. This assembly instructed the Council on Theology and Culture, in consultation with the General Executive Board, to prepare a plan by which such examinations could be described, developed and conducted. The 116th General Assembly (1976) approved the establishment of a Permanent Committee on Ordination Examinations. The committee designed exams in Theology, Bible, Sacraments and the Book of Church Order. Exams were administered and graded by the presbyteries of PCUS.

In October 1978 discussions were begun to unite the two examining bodies. The first joint meeting of the two groups occurred April 22-24, 1979 in Erlanger, Kentucky.

The "Standard" Ordination Examinations consist of five exams described in the Book of Order (G-14-0310 d.(1)-(5): Open Book Bible Exegesis, Bible Content, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacraments, and Church Polity. All five exams must be passed in order to satisfy the requirements for ministry set forth in the Book of Order.

The Bible Content Examination is a short answer exam, machine-scored, and is ordinarily taken during the first year of seminary to determine one's basic knowledge of the Bible. The other four exams are professional examinations, not academic tests. They differ from seminary examinations, which measure academic knowledge. They also differ from presbytery examinations, which assess the acceptability of one's theological convictions.

The purpose of the written ordination examinations is to determine one's entry-level readiness for ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Examinations present pastoral challenges whereby candidates can demonstrate how they integrate faith and theological education in ministry. The underlying questions are, "Do these examinations provide evidence that the person who wrote them is ready to engage in pastoral ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)? Is there evidence that the intellectual background developed in seminary can be applied to pastoral situations with integrity and skill?"

## WHEN AND WHERE EXAMS ARE GIVEN

Bible Content Examinations are given once a year on the first Friday in February from 10 A.M. until 12:00 Noon.

Final year Ordination Examinations are given twice a year in August and January:

- The last full weekend in August BEFORE Labor Day weekend.
- The fourth weekend in January.

The schedule for the Ordination Examinations is:

### Friday

- 8:30 a.m. - Orientation
- 9:00 a.m. - Theological Competence (3 hours)
- 1:30 p.m. - Worship & Sacraments (3 hours)

### Saturday

- 9:00 a.m. - Church Polity (3 hours)
- 12:00 Noon - Bible passages announced; completed examination is due the following Thursday - 9:00 A.M.

Examinations are administered on many seminary campuses nationwide. Exams are shipped to proctors approximately two weeks prior to the date of administration, in a way that enables accurate tracking of the parcels. Lost or missing packages can be traced. The proctor accepts responsibility for ensuring the materials arrive in a timely fashion. Proctors are also expected to check the contents of the package for omissions or errors. Prompt checking ensures the smooth operation of the system. Proctors are also expected to read the instructions carefully when they arrive. Persons taking exams are encouraged to do so at one of the established testing sites. However, if a candidate is no longer in seminary and is not able to travel to one of the testing sites within a reasonable amount of time s/he may request a Special Proctor.

Special Proctors: If a person taking exams does not live within a reasonable distance of a seminary testing site (2 to 3 hours of driving time or public transportation), arrangements may be made for a Special Proctor. A Special Proctor must be a person who is reliable, responsible, and who will return exam materials to the Office of Examination Services promptly after exams are administered. S/he may be a pastor, CPM member, Elder, or other person agreeable to the CPM.

All contact information for a Special Proctor is to be included on the authorization form at the time of registration. Since grades are released by fax, be sure to include a fax number, or exam results may be delayed.



# THE BIBLE CONTENT EXAMINATION

The Presbyterian Church considers basic knowledge of the content of the Bible to be an essential prerequisite for ministry. The purpose of the Bible Content Examination is to determine whether or not a candidate has such basic knowledge. This exam is ordinarily taken in the first year of seminary (See G-14.0310 b.). The two-hour examination contains 100 multiple-choice questions about the Bible, using the New Revised Standard Version for all quotations (English exams). The examination is given only once a year. The questions vary in difficulty, and cover the entire Bible as required by the General Assembly in 1978.

Applications: Candidates may secure authorization forms for the Bible Content Exam from their presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry or from the PCUSA/OGA website ([www.pcusa.org/exams](http://www.pcusa.org/exams)). Written confirmation is sent to each person who has registered to take the Bible Content Exam. Because this is a standardized examination, there is no alternate date for taking this exam.

Fees and Deadlines: The fee for the Bible Content exam is \$90. The fee must accompany the registration form or the registration will not be processed. Registration materials must be postmarked on or before December 15.

For PCUSA inquirers and candidates ONLY, there is an early registration discount of \$20 if registration materials are postmarked at least one month before the deadline (early registration deadline: postmarked on or before November 17).

Grading: A grade of 70 correct answers or better is required to pass this exam. Answer sheets are machine-graded. Overall and part scores, along with the original answer sheets, are returned to the candidate through the proctor. Scores are also sent to the presbytery or classis identified by the candidate.

Languages: The Bible Content Exam is available in English, Spanish and Korean.

Special Arrangements: Candidates who have learning or physical disabilities should discuss special arrangements with their CPMs, proctors and the Office for Examination Services.

Cancellation: After registrations have been confirmed, an exam will be subject to a 50% cancellation fee up until two weeks before the administration of the exam. If an exam is cancelled within the two weeks before the exam is to be administered, the fee will be forfeited. In case of illness or emergency, please contact the Office of Examination Service as soon as possible; under such circumstances a fee may be refunded at the discretion of the Associate for Examination Services. Please be sure to consult with your Committee on Preparation for Ministry (or Committee on Ministry) before canceling an exam.

Remember -

Payment must be submitted with the application form in order for registration to be processed. Application forms which do not include payment will be returned to the applicant.

SEND APPLICATIONS AND FEES TO:

Presbyterian Church (USA) – Exam Processing  
P. O. Box 643647  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3647

# WRITTEN ORDINATION EXAMS

## Registration/Authorization

Candidates or Inquirers are expected to take all four "senior" ordination examinations the final year of seminary or after the equivalent of two full-years of theological education (See G-14.0310 d., paragraph 2). The decision whether to authorize a person to write the examinations belongs solely to the presbytery. An Inquirer, Candidate must have authorization of the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry in writing in order to take the standard written exams. When authorizing a person to write the examinations, the signature of the chairperson of CPM) certifies that the applicant:

- is under the care of the presbytery (or working with the Presbytery to have his/her ordination recognized in the PCUSA)
- has completed two years of theological education;
- is judged by the committee to be ready to write examinations;
- has served in at least one field education or supervised ministry placement; and,
- has taken requisite classes in the areas of examination.

The same authorization form is to be used by ministers of other denominations who are seeking admission to the PCUSA, and who have permission from a Committee on Ministry to take exams.

In order to keep records current, candidates and inquirers must submit a signed authorization form, along with appropriate fees, each time exams are to be taken. Please complete all information requested on the form, including information about any exams that have already been taken (Bible Content Exam or other ordination exams).

Authorization to take the "senior" written ordination examinations does not include registration to take the Bible Content Examination

Exam Schedule: Inquirers/Candidates who are writing exams for the first time are encouraged to write all four exams at that time. The examinations are intentionally given in two days time as a way of evaluating the candidate's stewardship of time and energy, an important aspect of life in ministry. Introductory materials indicate the time limits for each exam. Members of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examination for Candidates, who write and administer the exams, understand that a candidates' response is to be evaluated on the basis of the time allotted.

Registration: Authorization forms to write Ordination Exams are available through CPM Moderators or on the Internet at: [www.pcusa.org/exams](http://www.pcusa.org/exams). You may find these forms under the heading: "Application Forms". All Authorization forms must be signed by the appropriate Committee Moderator or his/her designee. Requests for special needs are to be submitted in writing by the CPM or COM Moderator and mailed with the authorization forms.

## Fees and Deadlines:

The fees for the written Ordination Exams are: \$90 per exam

Fees must be included with the authorization form or registration for exams cannot be completed. Registration materials must be postmarked on or before the deadline as follows:

Deadline: for August exams: JULY 15.

Deadline: January exams: DECEMBER 15.

For PCUSA inquirers and candidates ONLY, there is an early registration discount of \$20 if registration materials are postmarked at least one month before the deadline (early registration deadlines: June 16 and November 17).

Confirmation: Receipt of authorization is confirmed by letter, generally within two weeks after the application is received in the Office of Examination Services. The confirmation letter includes information and preliminary instructions as well as the applicant's I.D. number. The I.D. number is used throughout the exam process to ensure anonymity for candidates. The candidate is asked to verify the accuracy of the information in the letter.

If the name, address, presbytery or exam location changes, or if there are changes in one's exam schedule, contact the Office of Examination Services immediately!

If a Letter of Confirmation has not arrived within two weeks after forms were mailed, please contact the Office of Examination Services! Unfortunately, forms sometimes get lost in the mail, and authorization information is sometimes processed incorrectly by the bank. There have been instances where individuals thought that they were registered but weren't. It is most important -- and the responsibility of each candidate -- to follow instructions carefully and to stay in close contact with the links to the process, i.e., proctors and committee chairpersons from each candidate's presbytery. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that all necessary steps in the application/registration process have been fulfilled.

Cancellation: After registrations have been confirmed, exams will be subject to a 50% cancellation fee up until two weeks before the administration of the exam(s). If exams are cancelled within the two weeks before the exams are to be administered, all fees will be forfeited. In case of illness or emergency, please contact the Office of Examination Service as soon as possible; under such circumstances fees may be carried over at the discretion of the Associate for Examination Services. Please be sure to consult with your Committee on Preparation for Ministry (or Committee on Ministry) before canceling any exam(s).

Fees are to be submitted with your authorization form or your registration will not be processed!

SEND APPLICATIONS AND FEES TO:  
Presbyterian Church (USA) – Exam Processing  
P. O. Box 643647  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3647

Grades for Exams: All grades, exam materials and post-examination correspondence are given out through Proctors. Initial grades are released to proctors by fax. Exam booklets and grade sheets are shipped to Proctors about a week later. Grades are not released to individuals by the Office of Examination Services – you must contact your Proctor.

Summaries of grades are also sent to all CPM Moderators.

**Presbytery# \ Name**

004 Abingdon Presbytery  
012 Alaska Presbytery  
016 Albany Presbytery  
024 Arkansas Presbytery  
030 Atlantic Korean-American  
048 Baltimore Presbytery  
052 Beaver-Butler Presbytery  
068 Blackhawk Presbytery  
076 Boise Presbytery  
080 Boston Presbytery  
096 Carlisle Presbytery  
100 Cascades Presbytery  
108 Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery  
110 Central Florida Presbytery  
116 Central Nebraska Presbytery  
120 Central Washington Presbytery  
125 Charleston-Atlantic Presbytery  
126 Charlotte Presbytery  
128 Cherokee Presbytery  
132 Chicago Presbytery  
136 Cimarron Presbytery  
140 Cincinnati Presbytery  
146 Coastal Carolina Presbytery  
152 Dakota Presbytery  
156 deCristo Presbytery  
164 Denver Presbytery  
168 Des Moines Presbytery  
172 Detroit Presbytery  
176 Donegal Presbytery  
180 East Iowa Presbytery  
182 East Tennessee Presbytery  
183 Eastern Korean Presbytery  
184 Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery  
188 Eastern Oregon Presbytery  
190 Eastern Virginia Presbytery  
192 Eastminster Presbytery  
200 Elizabeth Presbytery  
218 Flint River Presbytery  
221 Florida Presbytery  
223 Foothills Presbytery  
224 Genesee Valley Presbytery  
228 Geneva Presbytery  
234 Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery  
236 Glacier Presbytery

**Presbytery# \ Name**

240 Grace Presbytery  
248 Grand Canyon Presbytery  
252 Great Rivers Presbytery  
254 Greater Atlanta Presbytery  
258 Hanmi Presbytery  
266 Heartland Presbytery  
270 Holston Presbytery  
276 Homestead Presbytery  
280 Hudson River Presbytery  
284 Huntingdon Presbytery  
292 Indian Nations Presbytery  
296 Inland Northwest  
298 Presbytery of the James  
300 John Calvin Presbytery  
308 The John Knox Presbytery  
316 Kendall Presbytery  
320 Kiskiminetas Presbytery  
328 Lackawanna Presbytery  
332 Lake Erie Presbytery  
336 Lake Huron Presbytery  
340 Lake Michigan Presbytery  
344 Lehigh Presbytery  
348 Long Island Presbytery  
352 Los Ranchos Presbytery  
364 Mackinac Presbytery  
368 Maumee Valley Presbytery  
380 Miami Presbytery  
382 Mid-Kentucky Presbytery  
383 Mid-South Presbytery  
385 Middle Tennessee Presbytery  
387 Midwest (Hanmi) Korean Amer  
388 Milwaukee Presbytery  
392 Minnesota Valleys Presbytery  
394 Mission Presbytery  
397 Mississippi Presbytery  
400 Missouri River Valley  
404 Missouri Union Presbytery  
412 Monmouth Presbytery  
416 Muskingum Valley Presbytery  
424 National Capital Presbytery  
428 Nevada Presbytery  
432 New Brunswick Presbytery  
436 New Castle Presbytery  
440 New Covenant Presbytery

**Presbytery# \ Name**

442 New Harmony Presbytery  
443 New Hope Presbytery  
444 New York City Presbytery  
448 Newark Presbytery  
452 Newton Presbytery  
460 North Alabama Presbytery  
464 North Central Iowa Presbytery  
468 North Puget Sound Presbytery  
472 Northeast Georgia Presbytery  
476 Northern Kansas Presbytery  
480 Northern New England  
484 Northern New York Presbytery  
488 Northern Plains Presbytery  
492 Northern Waters Presbytery  
496 Northumberland Presbytery  
500 Northwest (PR) Presbytery  
504 Ohio Valley Presbytery  
508 Olympia Presbytery  
516 The Pacific Presbytery  
520 Palisades Presbytery  
524 Palo Duro Presbytery  
528 Peace River Presbytery  
530 The Peaks Presbytery  
536 Philadelphia Presbytery  
544 Pines Presbytery  
548 Pittsburgh Presbytery  
550 Plains and Peaks Presbytery  
552 Prospect Hill Presbytery  
554 Providence Presbytery  
556 Pueblo Presbytery  
560 Redstone Presbytery  
564 The Redwoods Presbytery  
568 Riverside Presbytery  
572 Sacramento Presbytery  
577 St. Andrew Presbytery  
579 St. Augustine Presbytery  
584 Salem Presbytery  
588 San Diego Presbytery  
592 San Fernando Presbytery  
596 San Francisco Presbytery  
600 San Gabriel Presbytery  
604 San Joaquin Presbytery  
608 San Jose Presbytery  
612 San Juan Presbytery

**Presbytery# \ Name**

616 Santa Barbara Presbytery  
620 Santa Fe Presbytery  
624 Savannah Presbytery  
628 Scioto Valley Presbytery  
632 Seattle Presbytery  
636 Shenandoah Presbytery  
640 Shenango Presbytery  
642 Sheppards & Lapsley  
644 Sierra Blanca Presbytery  
648 South Alabama Presbytery  
652 South Dakota Presbytery  
660 South Louisiana Presbytery  
672 Southeastern Illinois Presbytery  
676 Southern Kansas Presbytery  
680 Southern New England  
692 The Southwest (PR) Presbytery  
696 Stockton Presbytery  
700 Susquehanna Valley Presbytery  
704 Tampa Bay Presbytery  
708 Transylvania Presbytery  
712 Tres Rios Presbytery  
713 Trinity Presbytery  
714 Tropical Florida Presbytery  
716 Twin Cities Area Presbytery  
724 Upper Ohio Valley Presbytery  
728 Utah Presbytery  
732 Utica Presbytery  
736 Wabash Valley Presbytery  
740 Washington Presbytery  
748 West Jersey Presbytery  
751 West Virginia Presbytery  
756 Western Colorado Presbytery  
760 Western Kentucky Presbytery  
764 Western New York Presbytery  
766 Western North Carolina  
768 Western Reserve Presbytery  
776 Whitewater Valley Presbytery  
784 Winnebago Presbytery  
788 Wyoming Presbytery  
796 Yellowstone Presbytery  
800 Yukon Presbytery

# WRITING THE EXAMS

Candidates should read the description of each examination in the Book of Order G-14.0310c & 14.0310d. There are periodic amendments to these provisions, so this should be done in the current Book of Order.

It is important for the candidate to be prepared for this process. One needs to think about the sequence of the examinations and be prepared to move from one area to the next in each of the exams in an orderly fashion. The exams are designed to encourage the candidate to express an understanding of ministry, not to "trick" the candidate in any way, which would be contrary to life in the community of faith. The examinations are designed to provide opportunity for multiple approaches, rather than to operate on the assumption that there is only one "correct" way of responding.

Special Arrangements: Special arrangements can be made for candidates with physical handicaps and/or learning disabilities upon prior approval from the presbytery of care. These arrangements must be made at the time of authorization.

Books for Biblical Exegesis Exam: Four weeks before the "senior" ordination examinations are to be administered, the names of the books of the Bible (one from Old Testament and one from the New Testament) from which the passages for the Biblical Exegesis exam will be taken are released. Candidates may choose either the Old Testament or New Testament passage with which to work. The names of the Books are available through proctors, through the PCUSA website at [www.pcusa.org/exams](http://www.pcusa.org/exams), or by calling the Office on Examination Services at (888) 728-7228, ext. 5746.

Instructions: At the time that exams are administered, Inquirers/Candidates will receive current cover sheets or Instructions for each examination (the same instructions that are sent with confirmation materials). These Instructions indicate the constitutional definition for that area, criteria for grading, and any special provisions, which relate to that examination.

Languages: The four "senior" Ordination Examinations are available in English, Spanish and Korean.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious abuse of this system. If plagiarism is suspected, the candidate's exams will be returned un-graded. The proctor and the presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry will be notified, supplied with supporting documentation. Disposition will be determined by the presbytery committee. To avoid even the appearance of plagiarism, be sure to cite all appropriate references and quotations on your exam papers.

Music, I-pods, etc. Out of respect for all who are taking exams, Inquirers/Candidates may not use I-pods or other musical devices during the three sitting exams.

# OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS

## G-14.0310d(1)

“This examination shall assess the candidate’s ability to find and state the meaning of an assigned passage of Scripture, demonstrating working knowledge of the original language of the text and ability to understand its historical situation.

The candidate shall have access to any or all of the following:

Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, on-line materials and other exegetical tools, including those which presuppose knowledge of the biblical languages. Using these, he or she shall be asked to state the meaning of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church.”

## HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES Open Book Biblical Exegesis Exam

The following comments are intended as helpful advice from the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee to candidates preparing to take the Open Book Biblical Exegesis Exam. These are not specific instructions; those are found on the examination itself.

### Section I: Exegetical Study and Response to Exegetical Questions

Categories of questions: Note that there are four categories of exegetical questions; A, B, C and D the categories represent broadly the type of work done in exegesis. The questions are designed to address particular issues appropriate to each category and pertinent to the passage under study. Thus, with each exam, the categories of questions will remain constant, but the content of the questions will change.

- A. The Language of the Text – Questions in this category will focus on grammar and syntax, word usage, translation, and text-critical problems. They will presume a working knowledge of Greek or Hebrew (and occasionally both); as such they are an excellent opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate that he or she can use the biblical languages effectively in exegetical work. Candidates will answer six (6) questions, including at least one from each of the four categories in Section A.
- B. Literary Issues – Questions in this category will cover a wide range of topics pertaining to the literary character of the text, including but not limited to:
- Boundaries of the passage
  - Context
  - Genre
  - Structure and composition
  - Motifs, similes, and metaphors
  - Literary relationships to other biblical texts
- C. Principal Contents and Theology – Questions in this category will examine the significant contents and theological themes addressed or suggested by the passage.
- D History of Composition and Interpretation – Questions in this category will address the passage's historical/sociological setting, authorship, redaction history, and its interpretation by subsequent communities of faith.

### Section II: Exegetical Focus

Candidates are expected to produce a brief statement of exegetical focus drawn from their exegetical work on the passage. Candidates should remember that their study of the passage may and should include other insights in addition to those addressed in Section I. While the focus should be consistent with answers to the selected questions, candidates should draw on all their work, whether contemplated by the exegetical questions or not, in distilling a statement of exegetical focus.

The focus statement is not a summary of exegetical results. Rather, it is a statement of the principal meaning of the passage, upon which the sermon or lesson plan will be built. It should be no longer than two or three sentences. A single well-considered sentence is quite acceptable.

### Section III: Application

Candidates are required to make some contemporary use of their exegetical work in the form of either a sermon outline or a lesson plan. The sermon outline or lesson plan should be clearly centered on the

exegetical focus and consistent with the candidate's responses to the exegetical questions.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to provide a brief (2-3 sentences) description of the situation and audience to which the lesson or sermon would be taught or preached. This helps readers evaluate the appropriateness of language and imagery and the intelligibility of the argument or presentation. While the absence of such a description will not be considered grounds for failure, it will surely be noted by readers.

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Other helpful hints:

1. Double-space your text. For the convenience of readers, the main body of your essay answers should be either double-spaced; outlines (including sermon outlines and lesson plans, as well as other short outlines within the body of the essays) may be single-spaced.
2. Label your answers. Be sure to identify your essays in a manner consistent with the section and number of the question. For example: the second question of Section I.C should be identified as "I.C.2" or simply, "C.2". It is not necessary to include a repetition of the question, although you may do so if you wish. If sections of the exam are not clearly labeled, the exam will be returned ungraded.
3. Demonstrate a working knowledge of the language(s). Remember that part of the requirement of this exam [Book of Order G-14.0310d(1)] is the demonstration of a working knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. Choose to answer questions that will enable you to display your knowledge of the language. Questions in Section I.A are designed to require you to demonstrate at least minimal competence; you should make use of Greek or Hebrew in responding to them.
4. Remember your audience. Readers of the ordination exams are both clergy and elders, and with differing levels of familiarity with the language and tools of exegesis. While some have academic specialization in biblical studies, most do not. Write simply and directly. Avoid excessive use of technical terms, but be precise in your descriptions of grammar and syntax.

# THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE

G-14.0310d(3)

“This examination shall assess the candidate’s capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the gospel to the faith of the church in the contemporary world.”

EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)  
MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED

This examination shall assess the candidate's capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the Gospel to the faith and life of the church in the contemporary world. [Book of Order G-14.0310d(3)]

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and/or contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, and/or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Interpreting a confessional stance faithfully in context. An open book question

utilizing The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be included on this examination. The purpose of this question is to explore the candidate's capacity to articulate the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.

2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions

of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and The Book of Confessions.

WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate's views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate's competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be graded down for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

## THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION

Page 2 of 2

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (Continued)

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [Book of Order G-6.0108b]

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A clean, printed copy of The Book of Confessions (published 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. No marks, underlines or tabs are permitted. No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used. The Study Edition of The Book of Confessions may not be used. For the purpose of this examination, The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document.

The Book of Confessions must be turned into the proctor no later than one hour after the examination begins, and before Sections II and III of the exam are handed out.

Sections II and III of the examination are CLOSED BOOK.

You may write your answers in ink, type them, or use a computer. Do not use pencil or the exam will be returned ungraded. Please do not skip lines in the examination book supplied for the examination. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). Illegible papers shall be returned ungraded.

If you prefer you may use a word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or a network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12- point font size. Please number the pages, type your candidate number on the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.

The final grade for the examination will ordinarily be the average of grades received on all three sections. Rounding up or down shall be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections to be considered Satisfactory.

Papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar shall be graded accordingly.

CANDIDATE'S I.D.# \_\_\_\_\_

READER'S GRADING SHEET IN THEOLOGY

I. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THIS EXAMINATION. A single overall grade must be assigned by the reader to this examination. The overall grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. However, the examination must receive a grade of "3" or higher on at least two out of the three questions in order to be considered "SATISFACTORY". The examination will fail if any one of the sections is omitted.

Each examination will be read independently by two persons. If both grades are 3, 4, or 5, the final grade is SATISFACTORY. If both grades are 1 or 2, the final grade is UNSATISFACTORY. If one final grade is 1 or 2, and the other final grade is 3, 4, or 5, the paper will be given a third reading to determine the final grade.

II. THIS GRADING SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. The reader's comments on this grading sheet should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper, which will be read by the candidate and the committee on preparation for ministry. Use the back of the sheet for comments explaining why the grade for this paper has been assigned.

III. GRADING EACH SECTION. Indicate on the spaces below your grade for each section of this examination, using the following scale:

- 5 - EXCELLENT
- 4 - GOOD
- PASSING LINE 3 - ACCEPTABLE
- 2 - LESS THAN ACCEPTABLE
- 1 - POOR
- 0 - SECTION OMITTED

GRADES:      Grade

\_\_\_\_\_ Section I (Required) - God as Creator

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Section II (Required) - Holy Spirit

Section III      A - Prayer

—OR—

B - Mission of the Church

FINAL GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reader's Signature (Please write clearly)

NOTE: Comments include message for Committee on Preparation for Ministry.  
(Please check if applicable.)      (Over for comments)

## PREPARING FOR THE STANDARD ORDINATION EXAM IN THEOLOGY PREPARING FOR THE STANDARD ORDINATION EXAM IN THEOLOGY

The theological competence examination differs from the other ordination exams in vastness of the terrain from which its questions may be drawn. Unlike the polity exam, for instance, which draws from the very limited corpus of material contained in the Book of Order, the theology exam can draw from virtually any area in the Bible, in Christian tradition, and in contemporary life both in and outside of the church. Given this broad scope, it is likely that candidates taking this exam will face questions involving issues that they have not previously had a chance to think through in detail. For this reason it is essential in preparing for the theology exam to have mastered not only certain foundational areas of knowledge, but also certain skills. Candidates need to possess the ability to think theologically.

### WHAT SKILLS ARE REQUIRED?

1.) Making connections. In assessing readiness for ministry, the theology exam asks candidates to make connections between the theology they have learned and developed in seminary on the one hand, and real-life situations on the other. Candidates may be asked to make such connections in two directions: (1) From Christian faith to contemporary life: What are the implications and practical relevance of a particular doctrine? What difference does it make that Christians confess this particular belief? (2) From contemporary life to Christian faith: What are the theological issues at stake in a particular real-life scenario? How does Christian theology illuminate our understanding of a particular situation or set of issues?

2.) Interpreting the Reformed tradition. Candidates will be tested on their ability to function as competent interpreters of our church's theological heritage, particularly as it is reflected in The Book of Confessions. This means that candidates will need a basic, working knowledge of the confessional documents, a sense of the major themes and scope of the Reformed faith reflected in them, and an ability to articulate practical implications of the heritage and make connections with the contemporary life of faith.

3.) Doing Christian ethics. Particularly in the "Application to Ministry" section of the exam, candidates will sometimes encounter questions focusing on either practical or theoretical issues in Christian ethics. Because candidates are unlikely to be able to think through in advance all the possible ethical issues they might have to deal with in this section of the exam (or in the ministry for that matter!), it is important that they have in mind some basic hermeneutical approaches for bringing the scriptures to bear on ethical questions as well as some general strategies for ethical thinking in a Christian context.

## PREPARATION STRATEGIES

The theology exams in recent years have been more practical than academic in character. The focus of the exams has been on the candidate's ability to think and reflect theologically rather than to cite extensively from the theological literature, ancient or modern. Should this pattern continue to hold in the future, Inquirers/Candidates will be much more likely to be asked to present their own understandings of a theological issue rather than to discuss or compare the views of prominent theologians.

**Focus on Thinking Skills.** This means that as you prepare for the exam, your time will be much better spent learning to do your own theological thinking rather than trying to memorize reams of material about what various theologians had to say on topics x, y, and z. Reading ancient and contemporary theologians can be helpful preparations, but a lot depends on the way you approach such reading. A helpful strategy might be to first do your own thinking through a doctrine or topic of theology and then once your own views are sketched out to look over the shoulder of other theological writers, as it were, and see how they approach the same topic. How does their organization of the material compare with yours? Do they include important topics in their discussions, which you have left out? What sort of practical connections do they make with contemporary life, and how do these connections compare with the ones you have made?

Do they provide any helpful insights for dealing with questions, which remained problematic in your own account? Using other theologians as guides and teachers to help stimulate and clarify your own thinking on a topic will help to develop skills you need to function as a theological thinker in your own right, and give you the flexibility you need to think through issues on your own which you have not encountered in the work of others.

**Practice Making Connections.** A helpful study strategy might be to work through the major heads of doctrine (traditional topics of theological discussion). In developing a list of such topics, you might consult the more comprehensive confessional documents or a standard work of systematic theology. For each topic, use the method described in the preceding paragraph: try to do your own thinking about the content and relevance of this particular doctrine, and then use the work of other theologians, or the confessional documents to clarify and enrich your own thinking. Such a procedure will provide you with a solid core of well-thought through material spanning the heart of the Christian faith, along with valuable practice at doing your own theological thinking.

When it comes to developing skill at making connections in the reverse direction (from contemporary life to the theological tradition) there is no substitute for simple practice. Candidates preparing for the exam (to say nothing of pastors, who are called to be the theological interpreters of the congregation's life!) should work to develop a reflective theological awareness, which views the situations of everyday life in the context of Christian faith. In the situations which you face from day to day in the church, in your seminary community, in relationships with others, get in the habit of thinking about the theological dimensions of everyday life. What are the large issues at stake in the way people approach the tasks and challenges of daily living? What resonances are there between ordinary life and the great affirmations of Christian faith? What difference does it make to approach a certain situation as a Christian believer? How would you approach life differently if you were not a Christian? One way to facilitate such habits of thought is by a regular program of reading and prayerful reflection—on the text of the Bible especially, but also on the confessions and on the other theological and ethical writings. Many times you will find that the passage from Matthew, which you prayed over this morning, or the selection from the situations you face in everyday life. Developing habits of ongoing theological reflection will equip you with skills necessary for the taking of the exam, and far more importantly for the enriching and deepening of your work as a minister.

Learn about the Reformed Tradition. Many of the questions on past ordination exams have asked candidates for a specifically Reformed response to particular questions. For this reason candidates need to develop some idea of the characteristic themes, approaches, and preoccupations of the Reformed Tradition. A reflective reading of *The Book of Confessions* will certainly go a long way toward helping you acquire a “feel” for what is distinctive about classical Reformed theology, and there are also available a number of excellent guides and introductions to the Reformed Tradition which you may find helpful. Seminary professors or Presbyterian pastors can help you locate such resources if you are not sure where to find them.

It is worth noting that questions have sometimes appeared on past theology exams asking for a “Reformed” approach to topics for which there is no distinctively Reformed approach to the particular issue in question. A helpful strategy is to simply substitute the word “biblical” for “Reformed” in the question at hand. Such a substitution is quite in keeping with our tradition’s self-understanding as “Reformed and always to be reformed according to the Word of God” (*Reformata semper reformanda secundum verbum dei*).

Practice ethical thinking. Candidates will be in a much stronger position going into the exams if they have developed some facility for doing theological ethics. Most seminaries offer a number of courses in Christian ethics, which can be quite helpful in this regard. If you have not had a course, your seminary library or theology department ought to be able to recommend a good introductory textbook in Christian ethics, which will help with the basics, along with some journals, which deal with ethical issues.

Here again, the object is to be able to make coherent connections between Scripture, the church’s faith and real-life situations. There is much to be said for gaining practice at doing your own thinking. You might pick a contemporary issue to analyze and think about how you approach the task of bringing the church’s faith to bear in your analysis. Then look over the shoulder of a theological ethicist who is dealing with the same issue and see what you can learn from his or her approach to the topic.

Practice writing some questions. Many candidates have found it helpful to go back to old copies of the ordination exams and to practice writing out answers to one or more of the questions, using the same amount of time as allowed in the actual exam. A few practice runs of this type will help you get comfortable with the one-hour questions format, which the exam utilizes. You might seek out a seminary professor or pastor or other colleague to look at the answers you produce and talk with you about their strengths and weaknesses. As in other areas of life most of us get better with practice. If you don’t have access to back copies of the exam check with a local Presbyterian seminary your CPM chairperson, or the offices of the Presbyteries Cooperative Committee in Louisville.

Taking the Exam. The following are some general suggestions for writing the exam, many of which are simple common sense. Keep in mind as you are writing the exam that two separate readers must agree that the exam deserves either a passing or a failing grade and that readers come into the process very much on your side and hoping that you will do well.

Be organized and coherent. A great many of the failing grades on the theology exam result from a simple failure to respond to the question asked in a manner that is straightforward and clear. As with any essay exam, you are well advised to take some time before you begin writing to organize your thoughts. You might consider developing on a sheet of scratch paper a short working outline that responds clearly to the issues addressed by the question. A shorter answer that is clear, succinct, and well organized will nearly always do better than a longer one, which is rambling and lacks focus.

Make sure you answer the question that is asked. Double-check before you begin writing to make sure

you are providing what the question asks for. Sometimes a question includes a setting or scenario simply as an aid to stimulate your thinking about a particular issue, other times it requires a specific response to the scenario itself. Sometimes the question will ask for a pastoral response to persons in the scenario, other times for a general theological discussion of a particular issue. If the second part of the question asks you to draw from your answer to the first part, make it clear to your readers how the two are connected. If the question asks specific citation from The Book of Confessions, be sure to provide them. If the question asks specifically for a response directed to a six-year old, take care to answer in terms, which would be understandable to a young child. In short, make sure you are clear about what the question is asking for before you begin to write!

Do not try to second-guess the theology of the graders. Some candidates expend a great deal of energy worrying about what particular approach to a question will be compatible with the theological orientation of the graders, especially if the question focuses on an issue that is a source of controversy in the church. This is not necessary. Your task for passing the exams is to articulate a coherent point of view writing the Reformed heritage and to defend it adequately. This means your task for passing is simply to articulate a coherent point of view and defend it adequately. At some point in your candidacy process a judgment will be made regarding your orthodoxy, but the group which does that will be your home Presbytery and its CPM. They are the ones you should keep in mind if you are worried that some of your views might be seen as entirely acceptable in some parts of the church.

While the vast majority of exam readers are extremely conscientious about dealing fairly with points of view, which differ from their own, it is nonetheless wise policy where possible to avoid giving gratuitous offense. Flagrant use of gender-exclusive language, for example, would likely be perceived as offensive by some readers, as might consistent reference to the deity as a “goddess”. While graders will do their best to be fair and evaluate your exam on its merits, common sense suggest that you will be in a better position if you can avoid making them needlessly angry.

Do not assume too much expertise on the part of your readers. Readers vary in the amount of recent exposure they have had to theological discussions. In general you will be much better off if you do not assume you are writing your exam to be read by seminary professors! Keep in your discussions straightforward and clear. There is nothing wrong with using technical vocabulary, but if you are going to use it, make sure you define the terms for your readers the first time they appear. You will probably be well served if you picture as your target audience an intelligent and reasonably well-informed adult education class.

Do not panic. There have been occasions in the past when the theology exam has included clearly impossible questions: “Pastor, why did God let my child die this way?” Asking a candidate to solve the problem of evil in the course of an hour-long essay is an absurd assignment -- except for the fact that nearly all ministers can expect to face such questions before they have been in the field for very long, and when it happens they are going to have to come up with some kind of response! Should you be faced with one of these impossible questions on an exam, take a deep breath and try not to get rattled. Remember that all other candidates taking the exam and all the other ministers facing similar questions in the field are in the same boat as you before this issue. Use your common sense and theological training and pastoral instincts to do the best job with it you can. Exam readers will know full well that this is an impossible question, and nobody is going to be expecting miraculous solutions to problems, which have puzzled Christians for centuries!

Another source of panic is occasionally provided by the wording of certain questions, which will include phrases like this:

“Drawing upon your understanding of Scripture, classical and/or contemporary theology, respond to . . .”

Some candidate’s worry that this means graders will be evaluating their answer with a checklist, looking for appropriate Scriptural citations along with a discussion of the views both ancient and modern theologians. Such is not the intention of this wording! Readers are instructed very clearly that the intention of such phrases is permissive: their intended meaning is, “draw upon whatever resources are available to you and seem appropriate.” Citing the thought of various theologians on an issue can sometimes be helpful and impressive, but it is not required by this wording.

Be both pastorally sensitive and theologically substantive. In questions, which require you to respond directly to persons or practical situations, your pastoral skills will be evaluated along with your theological abilities (make sure you check carefully what the question is asking for!). What you should be striving for in such situations is a complementary union between the two - - they are not opposed to one another! Neglecting either aspect can get you in trouble: a response which totally neglects theological issues in favor of an exclusive concentration on peoples’ feeling will not be seen as adequate by the graders. By the same token, a response, which totally disregards the personal and practical dimensions of a situation and tactlessly clubs people over the head with citations from The Book of Confessions , however theologically appropriate they might be, will also be viewed as an inadequate response. At the end of the day graders will be asking: (1) Did the candidate adequately address the theological issues raised by the question? (2) Did the candidate handle the situation in a manner which leaves me feeling comfortable about the prospects of him or her serving as pastor to a group of people I care about?

#### A Final Word

A candidate making use of this document should remember that the advice and preparation strategies contained in it are suggestions only. They are not official dictates of the ordination exam committee, nor are they magical techniques guaranteeing success on the exam.

Other successful approaches are possible. What this document does represent is the advice and reflection of a group of people who have been involved for a number of years in the writing and grading of the theology exams, and who have devoted considerable time to preparing students for it. Our final word to candidates would be: Use this document when it seems helpful, and ignore it when it does not. We wish for you the best possible experience in taking the ordination exams!

Theology Task Group  
Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee

# WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

G-14.0310d(4)

“This examination shall assess the candidate’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and The Book of Confessions and their application to the life of worshiping communities.”

## EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Book of Order states:

“Worship and Sacraments. This examination shall assess the candidate’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and the Book of Confessions, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.” G-14.0310d(4)

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Questions on this examination will deal with both WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS. You will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to illustrate the connection between the contemporary understandings and practices of worship set forth in the Directory for Worship and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as it is expressed in The Book of Confessions.
- An ability to articulate a Reformed theological framework for addressing issues and practices related to worship and sacraments that arise from contemporary contexts for ministry.
- An ability to discern theological components in liturgical situations that may arise in ministry.
- An ability to discuss provisions of the Directory for Worship and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry.
- An ability to reflect theological and pastorally on the many different relationships between the ways the church understands and carries out its ministry and mission in the world and its worship and celebration of the sacraments.
- An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

In writing your answers, keep in mind that presbyteries elect elders as well as ministers of Word and Sacrament to serve as graders. Examinations should be written in jargon-free language. Technical language shall be used only where the task requires it or where it is appropriate.

The examination is divided into three sections:

- Section I is a required one-hour question about Reformed Liturgical Heritage. When you complete Section I, or at the end of the first hour of the exam, give your copy of The Book of Confessions to the proctor, who then will give you Sections II and III of the examination.
- Section II is a required one-hour question calling for a Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship. No books or resources shall be used.
- Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with Application to Ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. No books or resources shall be used.

Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., I.1. or III.A.1.).

## WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION

Page 2 of 2

A CLEAN, UNMARKED PRINTED COPY OF THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS MAY BE USED AS A RESOURCE ONLY DURING SECTION I OF THE EXAMINATION. The Book of Confessions must not contain any notes, underlines or tabs. NO OTHER BOOKS OR RESOURCES ARE PERMITTED, including the Study Edition of The Book of Confessions.

Submit all answers in your own handwriting in ink; or type the answers if you prefer. You may make corrections, deletions or additions without rewriting or erasing.

If you prefer you may use a word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12 point font size. Please number the pages, include your candidate number on each page of the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.

Be advised that illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Papers that cannot be understood by readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar will be graded accordingly. Papers written in pencil will not be graded.

The final grade for this examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions with rounding up or down determined by the readers on the basis of the examination's overall merit. You must complete all three sections of the examination. Even if two sections merit a superior score and one section is omitted, the examination will be considered unsatisfactory. The examination must receive a grade of three or higher on at least TWO questions to be considered satisfactory.

READER'S GRADING SHEET IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

I. OVERALL EVALUATION FOR THIS EXAMINATION. A single overall grade must be assigned by the reader for this examination. The overall grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. However, the examination must receive a grade of "3" or higher on at least two out of the three questions in order to be considered "SATISFACTORY." The examination will fail if any one of the sections is omitted.

Each examination will be read independently by two persons. If both grades are 3, 4, or 5, the final grade is SATISFACTORY. If both grades are 1 or 2, the final grade is UNSATISFACTORY. If one final grade is 1 or 2, and the other final grade is a 3, 4, or 5, the paper will be given a third reading to determine the final grade.

II. THIS GRADING SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. The reader's comments on this grading sheet should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper, which will be read by the candidate and the candidate's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Use the back of the sheet for comments explaining why the grade was assigned to this paper.

III. GRADING EACH SECTION. Indicate on the spaces below the grade for each section of this examination, using the following scale:

- 5 – Excellent
- 4 – Good
- Passing Line 3 – Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_ Satisfactory
- 2 – Less than Acceptable Unsatisfactory
- 1 – Poor
- 0 – Question Omitted

## PREPARING FOR THE WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION

### I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Worship and Sacraments examination provides an opportunity for the candidate to show how The Book of Confessions and the Directory for Worship provide direction for those seeking to lead God's people in worship, faithful to the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS are central to the development of faithful disciples within a community of faith. Because they are so central to our identity, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has always embraced the sense that our liturgical celebrations should be ordered according to constitutional standards. These standards are not so much "rules" as they are a communal discernment of, and reflection on, what God in Scripture would have us do and say in our worship.

### II. WHAT THE EXAMINATION TESTS

In preparing for the standard examination in Worship and Sacraments, it would be helpful to know, and on occasion to review, what the examination is testing. The Book of Order states: Worship and Sacraments. This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and The Book of Confessions, and their application to the life of worshipping communities."

### III. THE FOCUS IN EACH SECTION OF THE EXAMINATION

The Worship and Sacraments Examination consists of three sections: Reformed Liturgical Heritage; Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship; and Application to Ministry.

#### Reformed Liturgical Heritage (One Hour, Required)

The worship life of our denomination reflects the conviction that the church's worship, witness and service are inseparable and that the worship of our churches is to be informed by Reformed theology. It is thus important for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the theological foundations for our worship. A well-grounded knowledge of The Book of Confessions is essential for answering some of those "why" questions that confront pastors in a parish setting. Moreover, the Directory for Worship was "Created in harmony with Scripture and The Book of Confessions."

This section of the examination is designed specifically to assess your ability to function as a practical theologian within the distinctive framework of a Reformed theological and liturgical heritage as these are expressed within The Book of Confessions and the Directory for Worship. Because this question always requires you to cite specific passages from The Book of Confessions, you will be permitted to use a clean, unmarked copy of that constitutional resource for this section of the examination only.

Ordinarily, the required responses will indicate the minimum number of citations from The Book of Confessions required for an acceptable response. In some cases you will discover a potentially large number of possible BOC citations from which to draw; in other cases, you may discover that the number of appropriate citations is more limited. In either case, you should always seek to cite those passages, which focus most directly on the issue at hand.

When the issue is addressed in several creeds or confessions - - or when the confessional tradition witnesses to differences in emphasis, particularly between one historical era and another

- - the citations offered by you should show that you are aware of the broad sweep of the Reformed confessional tradition.

The required responses do not call for you to cite specific passages from the Directory for Worship, but they do insist that you demonstrate a sufficient awareness of the Directory's provisions, which bear upon the issue under discussion. Some questions may move from a knowledge of The Book of Confessions to a particular liturgical situation, while others may arise within a worship context and need support from The Book of Confessions.

### Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship (One Hour, Required)

The Directory for Worship, adopted in 1989, includes mandated and proscribed practices, but it also sets forth a fundamental practical theology of Christian worship, within which pastors and congregations are encouraged to explore new possibilities for worship that are appropriate to particular congregational contexts. Thus your ability to function as a practical liturgical theologian, to develop a Reformed theological framework within which to address difficult questions, concerns or issues is a necessary dimension of "readiness for ministry" and the focus of this section of the examination.

This section of the examination asks you to engage in constructive theological reflection on a significant issue or practice within the church's understanding and practice of worship. Thus reflection, which is to be shaped by the specific form of the required responses, must be done in a way that demonstrates familiarity with the provisions of the Directory for Worship.

In many instances, the specific issue or practice under consideration is not addressed directly in the Directory of Worship. In every case, however, it is possible to use the provisions of the Directory for Worship to develop or construct a theological framework within which the issue can be understood and addressed in ways faithful to the spirit of the Directory.

In constructing this theological framework, you will need to weave together provisions from a variety of places within the Directory, but the fundamental building blocks for this task can often be found most often in Chapter 1 (the dynamics of worship), Chapter 2 (the elements of worship) and Chapter 3 (ordering worship).

### Application to Ministry (One Hour, Two questions: Choose One)

You will be expected to demonstrate "appropriate pastoral sensitivity" to those persons involved in the situation. The readers will be looking for sincere and concrete expressions of the care and understanding that people deserve.

This section of the examination requires you to answer one of two questions. The distinctive emphasis in this final section of the examination is your ability to apply provisions in the Directory for Worship to concrete situations, which might occur in the practice of ministry, and to do so in ways that demonstrate appropriate pastoral sensitivity to particular persons. This section of the examination is particularly important in discerning your readiness for ministry. While knowledge of the provisions of the Directory for Worship is essential, it is also insufficient. Your ability to respond to particular persons in a pastorally appropriate manner is also essential.

Often, the questions for this section of the examination focus upon your understanding of the material in chapter 4 (ordering worship for special occasions), chapter 5 (worship and personal discipleship), chapter 6 (worship and the church's ministries of nurture and pastoral care) and sometimes used to test your

ability to apply your knowledge of the Directory's understanding and practice of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

You will not have access to either The Book of Confessions or the Directory for Worship for this portion of the examination. Thus, while you are expected to demonstrate familiarity with the provisions of the Directory, you are not expected to be able to cite or quote specific passages. Moreover, the readers do not expect that you will be able to deal with all the possible issues and directory provisions.

#### IV. HELPFUL HINTS FOR ANSWERING EACH SECTION OF THE EXAMINATION

Perhaps the most important preparation you can make is to pay attention to the language of the Preface to the Book of Order, particularly the hermeneutical or interpretive framework for reading the Constitution which is set forth in the Preface.

- (1) SHALL and IS TO BE/ARE TO BE signify practice that is mandated,
- (2) SHOULD signifies practice that is strongly recommended,
- (3) IS APPROPRIATE signifies practice that is commended as suitable.
- (4) MAY signifies practice that is permissible but not required.

##### Liturgical Heritage

Begin your preparation by studying those sections of The Book of Confessions, which are referenced in footnotes throughout the Directory for Worship. These references indicate how the committee that developed the Directory attempted to do its work in conversation with our Reformed theological heritage. These references are important in seeing the connections between particular provisions of the Directory and particular creedal or confessional texts. Expand your preparation by reflecting upon the relationship between particular doctrinal themes and the Directory's discussion of particular liturgical elements or celebrations. For example, the Directory lifts up the theological significance of "covenant" in its descriptions of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Marriage, etc.

Prepare for the Theological Competence and Worship and Sacraments examinations at the same time. What you learn preparing for one will almost always help you in your preparation for the other, since both examinations require a discussion of BOC citations.

Pay attention to the specific instructions in each of the required responses. If the response requires you to identify and discuss at least three confessional citations, then identify and discuss at least three citations, making certain that each of them is central to the issues or questions involved. If these three citations are on target, citing and discussing additional references will often lead a reader to raise the grade for this section. Failure to identify and discuss at least three citations, however, or simply listing without discussing any number of citations will result in a failing grade for this section of the examination. In addition, when the instruction require you to do something in the second part of the answer on the basis of your answer in the first part, make sure you show the connection.

Readers are given these or similar instructions in grading this section of the examination:

"One key to be considered in assigning a grade for this section is the extent to which the required responses cohere with one another. In other words, does the candidate's answer in the second part of the question really flow from and reflect the answer given in the first section. Candidates do have access to a clean, unmarked copy of The Book of Confessions during this portion of the examination. By contrast, candidates never have access to the text of the Directory for Worship for any section of the examination. As a result, they should not be expected to cite or quote specific passages from the directory in their

answers, though they should clearly demonstrate their knowledge of its provisions. Candidates will need to build links between the confessions' and creeds' teaching and the church's understanding and practice.

It is not necessary for the candidate to cite and discuss every possible BOC reference, but those references cited and discussed should be central to the issue under discussion."

### Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship

In one sense, it is difficult to prepare for this section of the examination. In Section I, the focus upon the relationship between the church's worship and its confessional heritage provides a kind of road map for how to proceed. Likewise, in Section III the need to address a specific series of comments and questions and respond to particular persons in a pastorally appropriate manner sets up the answer in a very concrete way. Section II, by contrast, is more open-ended. The situation identifies a problem or concern that you will need to address, but asks that you first set up a theological framework within which you will attempt to address the problem or problems. In order to do that, you will need to make use of the Directory as whole, and not just those sections that may deal specifically with the topic at hand.

The most important thing to do is to focus upon the way the Directory for Worship is structured or organized, because it provides a model for how to construct a theological framework within which specific issues of understanding and practice can be addressed. The Directory begins (cf. Chapter 1) by outlining the theological foundations for Christian worship. It then moves on (cf. Chapter 2) to identify and discuss the essential elements of Christian worship. Next it discusses how worship is to be ordered in both ordinary contexts (cf. Chapter 3) and in special contexts (cf. Chapter 4). The remaining chapters are devoted to the relationship between the church's common worship and personal discipleship (cf. Chapter 5); the church's ministries of nurture and pastoral care (cf. Chapter 6); and the church's mission in the world (Cf. Chapter 7).

Ordinary, a passing answer in Section II of the examination will depend minimally upon your ability to work constructively with the provisions in the first three (sometimes four) chapters of the Directory. Occasionally, Section II will involve a situation which is discussed quite specifically in one of the later chapters of the Directory, but even in such cases, you can develop a perfectly acceptable passing answer just by drawing upon your knowledge of the provisions in the Directory's first three or four chapters. If your answer demonstrates your knowledge of all sections of the Directory, however, it will often merit you a superior score.

Work together with someone else (or several others) in your preparation, using questions of this type drawn from previous standard examinations or from questions developed by the members of the group. Focus upon pastoral situations that may seem to challenge the normative language of the Directory.

Remember that the first task is almost always to articulate a Reformed understanding or theological framework within which to address the specific issue, request or problem raised in the question. Absent that theological framework, the answer to the question will fail, even though the response to the specific situation might be in compliance with the Directory for Worship.

Readers are given these similar instructions to guide them in assessing answers in Section II: "This section of the examination asks the candidate to engage in constructive reflection and on some liturgical topic or issue as this is informed by Reformed theology and practice. This constructive statement is to be shaped by the specific form of the two required responses. The answer must be one that demonstrates familiarity with the provisions of the Directory for Worship, but not The Book of Confessions. In order to receive a passing grade on this section of the examination, the candidate must fulfill both required responses. The first required response asks the candidate to articulate a Reformed

theological framework for understanding some matter within the worship life of the church. The second required response ask the candidate - - informed by his or her answer in the first required response - - to engage in a practical theological task (e.g., writing a newsletter article). The range of possible answers to the second required response will depend upon the number and quality of the directory resources chosen by the candidate in developing the theological framework. In every case, however, the answer to the second required response must grow out of the theological framework offered in the first required response. In this section of the examination, there is no explicit rubric requiring the candidate to demonstrate “appropriate pastoral sensitivity” in responding. Thus, one may not grade a candidate’s answer higher or lower because of the pastoral sensitivity issue here. On the other hand, if the candidate shows either remarkable pastoral sensitivity or frighteningly high insensitivity in responding, you would be fully justified in pointing it out in a note to the CPM. One could argue the readiness for ministry includes demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity all the time, not merely when one is “on duty.” Demonstration of appropriate pastoral sensitivity is specifically at issue in Part III of the examination; because of the need to bring together many ideas from the Directory in a very brief time, however, it is not central in this section of the examination.

### Application to Ministry

Questions in this section are taken from every part of the Directory for Worship.

One of the things that makes this section of the examination distinctive is the focus upon liturgical and sacramental practices - - including some practices with which you may be unfamiliar - - within a variety of congregational contexts. Thus, one of the first steps in preparing for this section of the examination would be to review chapters three and four, where the many ways in which the ordering of such “practices” is set forth. Pay attention to three things in particular: first, norms regarding sacramental celebrations; second, the fundamental patterns or frameworks for ordering Christian worship; and third, the wide variety and distinctive character of services appropriate for special purposes.

Pay attention to the ways in which the directory links the whole of the Christian life to worship, such that worship shapes and is shaped by personal discipleship, communal nurture and care, and the church’s mission in the world. Note the explicit ways in which patterns and norms from earlier chapters in the directory take form in the directory’s discussion of the relationship between, e.g., worship and the church’s ministry of evangelism or social justice.

This section of the examination is focused in a very particular way by the setting of the question. Often, the comments or questions of other persons will lift up the issues to be explored and you will be required to show “appropriate pastoral sensitivity” in responding to these persons. Pastoral sensitivity includes both affirmation and confrontation, but it never involves manipulating or demeaning the persons involved.

Readers of the examinations are reminded that there are often multiple issues that could be addressed on the basis of the situation, and that candidates may choose from among them in answering the question. If the situation involves several people and you asked to discuss at least one issue raised by each of them, your answer needs to show that you have done so. Occasionally, the questions in this section of the exam will ask you to discuss particular types of worship services or to write prayers appropriate for sacramental celebrations, based on the provisions of the Directory for Worship. In such cases, readers are advised of the possible alternative ways that candidates may take in developing passing answers.

# CHURCH POLITY

G-14.0310d(5)

“This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined.”

## EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

OPEN BOOK

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This examination is intended to "assess the candidate's working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined" [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the Book of Order effectively. Candidates will utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of the most current edition of the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.

Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

### ESSAY QUESTIONS THREE HOURS OPEN BOOK

This is an open-book examination. Candidates are to use a clean, printed copy of the most recent edition of the Book of Order. The books may not contain notes, underlines, or tabs. The Annotated version of the Book of Order may not be used.

The examination consists of three Sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of the grades received on all three Sections, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. However, the paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three Sections in order to be considered Satisfactory.

Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., I.1 or III.A.2)

If you prefer you may use a word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12 point font size. Please number the pages, include your candidate number on each page of the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.

### CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION

Be advised that exams written in pencil and illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Papers will not be graded down for poor syntax, or grammar however, when poor syntax or grammar compromises intelligibility, this could affect the grade.

The readers, in grading the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the Book of Order;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE

BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.

CANDIDATE'S ID#

\_\_\_\_\_

READER'S GRADING SHEET IN CHURCH POLITY

I. OVERALL EVALUATION FOR THIS EXAMINATION. A single overall grade must be assigned by the reader to this examination. The overall grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. However, the examination must receive a grade of "3" or higher on at least two out of the three questions in order to be considered "SATISFACTORY." The examination will fail if any one of the sections is omitted.

Each examination will be read independently by two persons. If both grades are 3,4, or 5, the final grade is SATISFACTORY. If both grades are 1 or 2, the final grade is UNSATISFACTORY. If one final grade is 1 or 2, and the other final grade is 3,4,5, the paper will be given a third reading, to determine the final grade..

II. THIS GRADING SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. The reader's comments on this grading sheet should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper, which will be read by the candidate and the candidate's committee on preparation for ministry. Use the back of this sheet for comments explaining why the grade was assigned to this paper.

III. GRADING EACH SECTION. Indicate on the spaces below the grade for each section of this examination, using the following scale:

- 5 - Excellent
- 4 - Good
- Passing Line 3 - Acceptable
- 2 - Less than Acceptable
- 1 - Poor
- 0 - Question Omitted

-OR-

FINAL GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (Please write clearly)

Reader's

NOTE: Comments include message for Committee on Preparation for Ministry. We orderly Presbyterians go about our ministries believing that one evidence of faithfulness to God is an ordered life together rooted in our sense of discipleship.

Polity is a relational expression of the Church's theological commitments (foundation). The Church Polity examination provides an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate an understanding of polity as a tool for ministry in the context of church life.

The examination is open-book and assesses how the candidate interprets, communicates and utilizes the Book of Order in his or her practice of ministry.

#### WHAT CANDIDATES OUGHT TO KNOW

- That the purpose of the Section I question, grounded in chapters I, II, III, and IV Book of Order, is to test the candidate's understanding of constitutional order as founded on basic theological principles that have been passed down to us over the years.
- That the purpose of the Section II and Section III questions is to test the candidate's ability to apply constitutional provisions to life in the church.

- That the Section II question addresses concerns that repeat themselves regularly in the practice of ministry .
- That many essay questions are based on actual contemporary situations in the church, and that they tend to have a preferable direction or resolution or range of responses rather than cut-and-dried correct answers: e.g, there is the general expectation that a satisfactory) resolution of a situation is reconciliation rather than victory.
- That one should appreciate what “Pastoral” means out in the church -- not mushy or permissive, but caringly constructive.
- That one should read and follow directions, carefully; that “list” does not mean “evaluate,” and that sometimes one is asked to respond to an individual and sometimes one is not.
- That one should keep track of time.
- That at least two of the three sections must be passed.
- That at least two people will be reading and evaluating the paper -- and eventually the candidate's CPM will read it, too; as well as a calling Presbytery Committee.
- That, repeatedly, new readers and seminarians who attend the reading group process comment on the fairness and care of this system.

Prepared by Polity Task Group, Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee

# THE GRADING PROCESS FOR “SENIOR” ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS

Every exam booklet is coded with the candidate's I.D. number, thereby guaranteeing anonymity. Each exam is read by at least two Readers in a Reading Group. If the two Readers agree that the paper should either pass or fail, that evaluation stands. If the two Readers are not in agreement, a third Reader grades; and the two Readers in agreement determine the outcome. Third Readers are not aware that their evaluation is a third reading. About one-third of the papers are read a third time. No single Reader is able determine that an examination is unsatisfactory. The Reader then writes comments explaining the evaluation of the paper. A numerical grade is assigned as follows:

- 5 - excellent Satisfactory
- 4 - good Satisfactory
- 3 - acceptable Satisfactory
- 2 - poor Unsatisfactory
- 1 - unacceptable Unsatisfactory
- 0 - no response Unsatisfactory

The Reader signs the grading sheet, returns the examination booklet to the convener, and proceeds to the next booklet to be graded. All comments are reviewed by those in charge of the Reading Group for clarity, support of the grade given, and unintentional errors.

Readers are encouraged to be pastoral in their comments. The comments are for the benefit of the students. The Reader's primary concern is for the building up of the body of Christ. The Reader strives to reflect care and wisdom in representing the spirit of PC (U.S.A.). (See the Preamble for the Rules of Discipline as one statement of the style of our work.)

Reader Selection: Presbyteries elect all Readers in accord with G-11.0103m. They are generally elected on the basis of their qualifications, such as: familiarity with the candidacy process; ability to discern gifts for ministry; readiness to accept a diversity of points of view within the ministry of the church; continuing intellectual vitality; continuing a vital, inquiring pilgrimage of faith; commitment to the Historic Principles of church order found in G-1.0300; and the ability to be constructively critical.

Grading Schedule: Readers convene twice yearly to grade exams, meeting in six different locales nationwide. Their expenses are assumed by PCC. Grading sessions convene in late October for the September exams and mid March for February exams. Any exam booklets that are returned to the PCC office after the Reading Groups have convened must wait to be read at the next grading session. Exams will not be read at any other time.

Grade Notification: It takes approximately seven weeks after the examinations are written before grades can be officially released to students. No grades are given over the telephone from the PCC office to candidates, nor are they sent to any other person without the prior written consent of the candidate. The PCC office has maintained candidate records since 1967.

Grades are sent to students via their proctors. Enclosed with each exam package is a letter from the PCC indicating either "satisfactory grades" as indicated in G-14.0310d., or an indication of exams which received grades of "unsatisfactory". Grade summaries are also sent to the Moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of the presbytery which the candidate has indicated is the presbytery of care. Booklets are sent to the candidate for review (and for photocopying if the candidate wishes). Within two weeks (14 days) of receiving the booklets and grade sheets, the candidate is responsible for sending them to the Moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The exams become part of the candidate's file.

## APPEALS

It is possible for an appeal to be submitted to overturn an unsatisfactory grade.

An Inquirer or Candidate cannot appeal a grade directly to the Office of Examination Services. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (or, in the case of ministers from other denominations, the Committee on Ministry) is to review the exam to determine whether or not an appeal is warranted. If the Committee agrees that a mistake was made in the grading of an exam, or that the grade given did not accurately reflect the quality of the work reflected in the exam, the Committee may then initiate an appeal. All appeals must be submitted in writing to the Office of Examination Services, along with a copy of the exam and the grading sheets for the exam.

Exams that are submitted for an appeal will be reviewed by a member of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates. If the appeal is sustained, the unsatisfactory grade will be overturned, and a satisfactory grade will be assigned to the exam. If the appeal is not sustained, the original grade(s) assigned to the exam will stand. The decision of the member of the PCC grading an exam is final.

Appeals: There are two types of appeals:

A. Correctable error: Occasionally, a paper will be improperly graded (e.g. grades were entered on the wrong line), or there may be other aberrations that call for corrective measures. Proctors, candidates, and appropriate presbytery representatives may bring concerns to the attention of PCC, which will rule on the issue at hand.

B. Grading issues: If the appropriate Committee of Presbytery believes that the quality of an exam is not properly reflected in the grade(s) assigned to the paper, the Committee may wish to make an appeal of the grade. The Committee shall request an appeal in writing, and submit it to the Office of Examination services, along with a copy of the examination and the comments sheets from the readers of the exam. The exam and the comment sheets will be forwarded to the member of the PCC who chairs the Task Group for exams in that particular area (e.g. Theology, Polity). The Moderator of the Task Group will determine whether the appeal is justified, and whether the exam should receive a different grade. The decision of the Moderator of the Task Group is final.

Requests for an appeal must reach the Office for Examination Services by:

December 15 for August exams

June 1 for January exams.

## REFLECTIONS FROM A READER

For more than 10 years I have read the fall ordination exams. I return each fall for a variety of reasons, both personal and corporate.

What drew me to read the first time was my own experience with the exams in the 1970s. During the fall of my senior year at seminary, I approached the exams with fear and trembling, with a sense of “one more hurdle -- one more hoop.” My preparation to take the exams amounted to worry and also a sense of blame. Worry that I would fail and blame those who said if I wanted to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church, I needed to pass all four exams. Hadn’t all my classes and study and papers and field work prepared me for ministry? Hadn’t my sense of call convinced me that ministry was where God wanted me? My fears were often echoed by my classmates.

Yet, between me and the goal of ordination lay four exams, exams I didn’t know how to study for, exams that would be graded by some nameless person somewhere. Not only did that person not know me, I felt I had no way to tell them of my hopes and dreams, no way to convince them that no matter how I did on the exams I needed to be ordained, for I felt the certainty of God’s call upon my life.

All went well and my ordination took place later that summer, and since then I have had the chance to serve the Church in several different settings.

So, when the opportunity to read exams came to me through my Presbytery, I jumped at the chance. Now, more that a decade later, I return each fall, believing what we do, as students and readers, is important and valuable to our Church.

As you might know, ordained elders and pastors gather in Reading Groups around the country in late October. For three, sometimes four days these men and women spend up to fourteen hours a day reading and grading and praying over the exams that are presented to them. Before each day begins, we gather for worship, and the exams and students who wrote them are always in the forefront of our approach to God. Before we begin to grade the different exams, sessions are held in which the reader’s talk about what we believe makes a good exam, reflecting on the preparatory work we have done in the weeks before we gather as a Reading Group.

While all four of the exams are different, calling upon different, yet interrelated and overlapping disciplines, as a reader, generally, I look for, evidence of at least three cognitive elements: knowledge, pastoral skills, and professionalism. Just as importantly, I also look for a sense of consistency between what is written in the opening sections of the exam and the practical application, which follows.

Quite simply, by knowledge, I try to determine, if the exam adequately answers the question placed before it. For example, in, the Worship and Sacrament Examination, I expect that the answer to any question will show a working knowledge of The Book of Confessions and the Directory of Worship. If the question calls for the “citing by number specific passages (e.g., O.OOO)”, I hope to see more than one related citation. A better exam presents citations from a variety of Confessions rather than several from one, or worse yet, from one chapter. The Book of Confessions, and the Directory of Worship are rich documents, filled with words of historical faith, and an understanding of their width and breadth will strengthen any answer.

By pastoral skill, I look to see if the exam is able to take theological concepts and translate them into answers and ideas that speak to today's Church. Again, using the Worship and Sacrament Examination as an example, if we are not able to take the words from the opening chapters of the Second Helvetic Confession and use them to help us form our own view of Scripture and Worship, then we might as well relegate the Book of Confessions to a box in the cupboard rather than keep it near our desk.

Finally, this reader looks for professionalism in all responses. By professionalism I mean pastoral sensitivity to people and their needs, joys, wants and hurts. Our Reformed theology cannot be separated from the people who sit in the pews, gather for session meetings and lay in hospital beds. In a scenario dealing with baptism in the Worship and Sacrament Exam, one which expressed a reluctance on the part of parents to have their child baptized, would be my hope that the response would deal not only with the Book of Confessions and the Directory of Worship, but also with the parents as people of God who come to their Church searching for answers.

In the other three exams, Church Polity, Theology, and Exegesis, I usually look for the same elements. But as the exams differ, so do my expectations concerning a good response.

In the Church Polity Exam, I look for consistency between the Book of Order citations (e.g., X-O.OOOO) called for and the practical application. The answers need to show the ability to take the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and clearly relate to issues in the local Church, Presbytery, community.

In the Theology Exam, as in the others exams, I grade on the exam's ability to present theological concepts in a clear and concise manner and to use those concepts to inform the "scenario" presented. A good paper presents more than one source, and a great paper recognizes the historical and contemporary applications of Reformed Theology.

As I stated in the beginning of this letter, for more than 10 years I have read the fall ordination exams. I return each fall for a variety of reasons, both personal and corporate.

We are the Church, related, in communion with each other, teaching a commonality of faith, celebrating through the Church a Risen Savior.

# CONCLUSION

The hallmark of these exams is the situational nature of the questions. Even the open-book Biblical exegesis assumes some type of community of God's people, lots of research and preparation. Field education is going to be very important on these exams. The exams put you in a situation that is possible, probable and likely to happen in a congregational setting. The more you have been around, talked to people, had experiences in the life of the church the better equipped you are to respond, because it is experiential response --- you can identify with and relate to the situation.

Situational experiences are by definition a "dilemma." "On-the-one-hand-and-then-on-the-other-hand" scenario. The one thing you do not want to do is to deny the "dilemma." Point out the good points in the situation -- point out where there needs to be some correction, that is what being a pastor is all about, and gently direct them. It takes discipline to move God's people in faith. Respond with heart and head --- the hallmark of Presbyterian ministry.

Remember that these exams are not being graded by seminary professors who know you, but by colleagues who do not know you. In assessing your readiness for ministry, they will rely solely upon the contents of your examinations. They are your colleagues --- and they know all too well that you will not get very far in ministry by denying the complexities of life. We work very hard with readers to help them see that they are engaged in ministry as they react to your written comments on these exams.

May God's richest blessings be with you as you prepare for ordination through the examination process!

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# SEMINARIES

13	Ashland Theological Seminary	59	Memphis Theological Seminary
14	Austin Theological Seminary	61	Fuller Seminary - Menlo Park Ext.
15	Bangor Theological Seminary	63	New Brunswick Seminary
17	Bethel Theological Seminary	68	North American Baptist Seminary
18	Union-PSCE at Charlotte, NC	69	Pacific School of Religion
19	Brite Divinity School	70	Grace Presbytery
22	Christian Theological Seminary	71	University of Tulsa/John Knox P.C.
24	Colgate-Rochester Divinity School	72	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
25	Columbia Theological Seminary	73	Princeton Theological Seminary
26	United Theological Seminary (OH)	74	The Presbyterian College (Canada)
27	Detroit Presbytery	75	Reformed Theological Seminary
29	Drew Theological School	76	San Francisco Seminary – Northern
30	Dubuque Theological Seminary	77	Regent College
31	Duke University Divinity School	78	SFTS Southern California
33	Palmer Theological Seminary	80	Central Baptist/St. Paul School Theol.
34	Eden Theological Seminary	81	Seattle Extension Fuller Seminary
36	Erskine Theological Seminary	82	Florida Center for Theological Studies
37	Seminario Evangelico de Puerto Rico	83	Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
40	Fuller Theological Seminary	84	Auburn Theological Seminary Union
41	Garrett-Evangelical Theo. Seminary	85	Union PSCE of Virginia
43	Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary	86	Fuller Seminary Southwest, Phoenix
44	Hanmi Presbytery	87	United Theological Seminary (MN)
46	Harvard University Divinity School	90	Vanderbilt University
48	Illiff School of Theology	91	Virginia Theological Seminary
49	Johnson C. Smith Seminary	92	Wake Forest Divinity School
51	Lancaster Theological Seminary	93	Wesley Theological Seminary
53	Louisville Theological Seminary	94	Western Theological Seminary
56	Luther Seminary	97	Yale Divinity School
57	McCormick Theological Seminary		