

## Grace Presbytery Policy on Theological Education

Adopted by Grace Presbytery on April 20, 2013

Persons who are considering beginning the inquiry process and their sessions are encouraged to contact the Committee on Preparation for Ministry as soon as possible so that policies can be fully articulated and understood early in the process. Ordination is an action of the wider church, and the decision of seminary is an important part of the process. To allow complete preparation and readiness to serve as a Teaching Elder, we encourage persons considering the process of coming under care to work in consultation with their home churches, their pastor, their session, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry when deciding where to attend seminary.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will walk with inquirers to assist in tailoring their education so that they fully explore their calling and receive the preparation required to serve that call. We are here to support inquirers and candidates in discerning and preparing for their paths of service.

The following shall be components of the seminary education for all persons under care in Grace Presbytery who are seeking ordination as Teaching Elders:

Master of Divinity degree, or its equivalent, including the following:

- PCUSA Polity
- Systematic theology including intentional study of reformed theology and theologians
- A course in Worship and the Sacraments
- All other specific education requirements as listed in the Book of Order:

*G- 2.0607c: "A transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation."*

Preference is given to PCUSA schools and to those with PCUSA programs of study, led by PCUSA Teaching Elders. PCUSA Seminaries include: Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, McCormick Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Auburn Theological Seminary (in covenant agreement with the PCUSA), and Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico (in covenant agreement with the PCUSA).

Schools with PCUSA study programs, led by PCUSA teaching elders include but are not limited to: Perkins School of Theology, Brite Divinity School, Fuller Seminary, and Gordon Conwell Seminary.

Ordinarily, students or graduates of Reformed Theological Seminary, Redeemer Theological Seminary, or Dallas Theological Seminary will not be taken under care of Grace Presbytery or cleared to seek calls in Grace Presbytery. These seminaries teach and affirm doctrines inconsistent with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). See explanatory notes.

## Explanatory Notes for Grace Presbytery Theological Education Policy

- Redeemer Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary both trace their origins to, and maintain relationships with, denominations that fail to affirm the ordination of women to all offices of the Church. This is in opposition to explicit statements in the Constitution of the PCUSA Book of Confessions.
  - See Book of Confessions, 10.4.64: “[*God the Holy Spirit*] calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.”
  - See Book of Order, G-2.0101: “*Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising authority by the ministry of women and men...*”
  - Neither Redeemer Seminary nor Reformed Seminary has any women on their Boards of Trustees.
- Reformed Theological Seminary requires all faculty members, administrators, and Board members initially and annually to affirm that “the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechism as accepted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1789, is the system of doctrine taught in Scripture and therefore it is to be learned, taught and proclaimed for the edification and government of Christian people, for the propagation of the faith and for the evangelization of the world by the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Redeemer Theological Seminary declares that “the internal coherence of the teaching of Scripture focused on the good news of God reconciling the world in Christ has been best understood historically within the classic Reformed tradition exemplified in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort and the Thirty-Nine Articles.”
  - These are in opposition to the PCUSA’s adoption and understanding of the authority of the entire Book of Confessions.
- See Book of Order, F.2.01-05 – The Church and Its Confessions and W-4.4003c: *Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?*
- The PCUSA recognizes and affirms the Confessional authority of all 11 documents in the Book of Confessions, including – but not limited to – the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.
- The PCUSA does not recognize or affirm the Confessional authority of the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the Thirty-Nine Articles.

- Dallas Theological Seminary teaches and espouses Dispensationalism—a doctrine declared by the 1944 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to be heresy.
  - See “DTS Doctrinal Statement – Core Beliefs” at [www.dts.edu](http://www.dts.edu)
  - 1944 PCUS Report on Dispensationalism: *“Dispensationalism teaches a series of resurrections and judgments, spaced over more than a thousand years. It is the opinion of your Committee that the above statement of the [Westminster] Confession of Faith does not admit of a multiplicity of resurrections and judgments as taught by many Dispensationalists. Conclusion: It is the unanimous opinion of your Committee that Dispensationalism as defined and set forth above is out of accord with the system of the doctrine set forth in the [Westminster] Confession of Faith, not primarily or simply in the field of eschatology, but because it attacks the very heart of the Theology of our Church, which is unquestionably a Theology of one Covenant of Grace.*

Note: This Theological Education Policy will apply to future inquirers or candidates of Grace Presbytery and not to those who are presently in the process.