

# *Reformed Church in America*

## Standards for the Preparation for Ministry

### #1 (Personal Faith and Evangelism)

#### **Demonstrate a mature personal faith in Jesus Christ and commitment and skill in nurturing others to embrace that faith.**

*The candidate shall be articulate about the power of congregational life to form persons in faith; shall evidence skill in designing and participating with others in a program of education; whether engaged with groups or individuals, shall take care to hand over the Christian faith and its practices in ways that are responsive to human developmental, personal and contextual realities; shall be able to give an account of the faith that is in him/her and daily seek to live out that faithfully; shall demonstrate awareness of God's redemptive labor in self and others, and a willingness to welcome the perception of others.*

### #2 (Call)

#### **Demonstrate a life worthy of the gospel, a sense of call to the office of minister of Word and sacrament, an understanding of that office in the Reformed tradition, and a commitment to its responsibilities.**

*Ever dependent upon God's grace, the candidate should be a model of faithful Christian practices. The candidate should be able to articulate a biblical and Reformed understanding of a call to ministry. More specifically, the candidate should be able to describe his/her own call to the office of minister of Word and sacrament—aware of the internal and external nature of this call. Finally, the candidate should be able to describe the responsibilities of a minister of Word and sacrament and demonstrate a personal commitment to such responsibilities.*

### #3 (Scripture)

#### **Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the Scripture (with sufficient Greek and Hebrew to understand nuances of the biblical text), commitment to its authority as Word of God, and insight in its interpretation.**

*The candidate shall articulate an overarching understanding of Scripture, and at least a paragraph on the content and perspective of any biblical book. Basic principles of biblical interpretation shall be demonstrated, including insights gained from consideration of grammar, genre, historical context, literary context, canonical context, and theological analysis. Some meaningful insight into the text that arises specifically from a consideration of the original languages shall be demonstrated. The ability to interpret Scripture appropriately for preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, and to demonstrate appropriate personal convictions on how the Bible functions as the Word of God, is expected.*

#### #4 (History and Theology)

##### **Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the history and teachings of the Christian Church, and insight in their interpretation.**

*The candidate should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major persons, movements and events in the history of the Christian church from the first century to the present, worldwide; and with specific reference to these, to articulate major issues that have arisen over time in the following areas: the development and variation of Christian doctrine; the geographical expansion and contraction of Christianity and its encounter with other faiths; and the variation of the relationship between church and society. In each of these areas, the candidate should also be able to reflect theologically on issues currently facing the church with attention to their historical context.*

#### #5 (Reformed Tradition)

##### **Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of and commitment to Reformed doctrine, government and worship.**

*The candidate will be able to demonstrate both an understanding of the historic situations in which the constitution of the RCA (i.e. the confessions, liturgies and church order) developed and adapted for use in America and a thorough knowledge of the content of the relevant texts. He or she will be able to articulate the inter relationship of the three parts of the constitution, and their use and authority in the congregations, assemblies and judicatories of the denomination. The candidate will be expected to offer reflections on the pastoral and missional significance of Reformed doctrine, government and worship, and to be conversant with their implications for ecumenical fellowship, especially in relationship to The Formula of Agreement.*

#### #6 (Leadership)

##### **Demonstrate the skill and understanding required to lead the people of God in faithfulness to their mission.**

*The candidate shall be able to: accurately interpret the ministry context and distinctive features of congregational culture relevant to empowering the people of God for meaningful and effective participation in God's mission in their ministry setting; empower and equip leaders for worship, teaching and study, community and care, social witness, evangelism, prayer and spiritual disciplines, mission, and leadership. The candidate shall be able to identify and effectively use her or his leadership style, demonstrate competence in such practical matters as leading effective meetings, maintaining appropriate boundaries, exercising responsible stewardship of time, and appropriating relevant insights from the leadership literature.*

## #7 (Pastoral Care)

### **Demonstrate skill, understanding and compassion in caring for persons and congregations.**

*The candidate shall be able to demonstrate empathic understanding for persons facing stressful life experiences, shall have a capacity to celebrate with persons experiencing joyous events, and shall possess skills for exercising discipline in guiding persons toward personal and spiritual wholeness. The candidate shall have an understanding of how persons function in family and congregational systems and be sensitive to cultural and contextual factors in the providing of pastoral care. The candidate shall be able to cultivate spiritual resources in persons for their sustaining and nurture in faith, but also cultivate these resources in the candidate's own life as regards faith, self care, accountability and clarity about personal boundaries. The candidate shall be able to discern when to draw upon the resources of other professions in providing care and to train lay leadership in extending the pastoral care ministry of the church beyond that of the pastor.*

## #8 (Worship and Preaching)

### **Demonstrate skill and understanding to lead worship, preach the gospel and administer the sacraments.**

*The candidate should be able to articulate and put into practice a Reformed vision of the enduring structure of the Word of God in proclamation, sacrament, and discipline which underscores the real presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the proclamation of the Word, in the bread broken and the cup poured out, in the waters of baptism, and in the corporate life of the Christian community. The candidate should also demonstrate a clear sense of the primacy and authority of the Scriptures in preaching, the critical role of the people of God as salt and light in the world, and an awareness of the role of time and culture in both preaching and worship.*