

Presbytery of Charlotte
Committee on Preparation for Ministry
**Policy on PC (USA) Seminary Requirements
For All Inquirers and Candidates**

Rationale

In the Reformed Tradition, a call to the ministry is twofold. First, there is the call of God inviting an individual to serve as Christ's agent in the Church. This "inner call" Calvin described as "secret" to the individual, noting that the Church is not a witness to this inner call (Inst. 4.3.11).

In addition, a call to the ministry in our tradition involves also an "outer call," which takes place as God works through the church, using human agents to determine the fitness of ministers. This aspect of the call is sometimes described as "the approbation of the people of God." Calvin was convinced that this outer call confirms the call of God because "those whom the Lord has destined to such high office, he first supplies with the arms to fill it, that they might not come empty-handed and unprepared" (Ibid.). This is why Calvin insisted that the Church should test ministerial candidates. Following Calvin's teaching, Presbyterian and Reformed Churches examine candidates to confirm the call of God.

The PC (USA) Church follows this theology of the call in all its requirements for ordination. The *Book of Order* mandates the Presbytery to exercise oversight of the inquirer's plans for education, including the choice of institutions and required courses of study. {G-14.0306a(2)}

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) affirms that inquirers and candidates benefit most from intensive, theologically-focused leadership education in a PC (USA) seminary. The PC (USA) setting nurtures them in the ethos and worship of the Reformed Tradition and it provides fertile soil for exchange of ideas with people dedicated to the mission of the PC (USA), its form of government, confessions, and polity.

Policy

Therefore, it is expected that all inquirers and candidates under care of Charlotte Presbytery will attend and receive a degree from a PC (USA) seminary. This policy became effective on January 1, 2002.

Exceptions

If an individual elects to attend a non-PC (USA) seminary, the following procedure applies:

1. When requesting enrollment as an Inquirer in Charlotte Presbytery, an individual considering matriculation at a non-PC (USA) seminary shall submit the rationale for this choice in writing to the Transitions Subcommittee.
2. The individual shall also submit to the Transitions Committee a written plan for meeting the requirements of Charlotte Presbytery, with specific reference to the following courses which shall be taken at a PC (USA) seminary: *Reformed Theology, Preaching, Worship and Sacraments*, and *Church Polity*. Each course should earn the equivalent of three credit hours in a Master of Divinity curriculum accredited by the Association of Theological Seminaries (ATS).
3. The Transitions Subcommittee will convey the rationale and plan to CPM, and the committee of the whole shall approve or deny the request for an exception to the expectation that all persons under care attend a PC (USA) seminary.

It is expected that students will take the four required courses on a PC (USA) seminary campus. The CPM maintains that this provides optimum exposure to the Reformed learning community.

Monitoring Progress

If the rationale for attendance at a non-PC (USA) seminary and the plans for meeting the requirements of Charlotte Presbytery are approved by CPM, the plan will be reviewed at each annual consultation thereafter. An assessment of progress will be included in the Annual Consultation Report on Form 4. Students must submit transcripts indicating that courses have been attempted and passed.

Transfers

Candidates from other Presbyteries who are transferred to Charlotte Presbytery for examination for ordination are expected to fulfill all requirements of the transferring Presbytery.