

COMPETENCY CRITERIA FOR COMMISSIONED PASTORS

1. Maturity of faith

Demonstrate a mature personal faith in the Triune God

The candidate by word and deed shall

- express an abiding and growing faith in, and love for Jesus Christ.
- demonstrate an appropriate awareness of and sensitivity to the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, in the Christian community, and in personal experience.
- give appropriate evidence of: an enduring trust in God's providence; a whole-hearted commitment to obeying God's revealed will; an awareness of sinfulness and a deep reliance upon God's grace; a grateful life of love and service, and a confident hope in God's gracious purposes for this world.
- demonstrate a life of prayer, a healthy relationship to God and other persons, and involvement in small groups and congregational life.
- exhibit a spiritual maturity that is witnessed in a Christ-like life, self-awareness, humility and openness to correction, a sensitivity and care for other people, and an understanding and practice of discipleship.
- show evidence of ordination as an Elder or else both the recognized gifts required of an Elder and an indication of the intent to be ordained by a congregation as an Elder.

Normally, the classis shall satisfy itself regarding this competency either at admission to the commissioned pastor process, or else early on in the training process that leads to commissioning.

2. Personal integrity and call

Demonstrate a life worthy of the gospel, a sense of call to be a Commissioned Pastor, an understanding of that ministry in the Reformed tradition, and a commitment to its responsibilities.

The candidate shall

- demonstrate servanthood, measured by growth in God's grace, as well as evidence of a fruitful ministry.
- understand the expectations, boundaries, and opportunities of ministry outlined in Scripture and the *Book of Church Order*.
- exhibit a Reformed vision for ministry embracing the local congregation, classis, and the greater church.
- articulate a biblical, personal, and Reformed call to ministry as prompted by the Holy Spirit and as attested to by others.
- show evidence of personal integrity by completing a psychological assessment and successfully passing a criminal background check administered by the classis or its designated agent, and interpreted by the classis.

3. Understanding of the Old and New Testaments and biblical interpretation

Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the Scripture, commitment to its authority as the Word of God, and insight in its interpretation.

The candidate shall

- articulate an understanding of biblical authority consistent with the doctrinal Standards of the RCA.
- exhibit a general knowledge of the content of the 66 books and specific knowledge of key biblical doctrines necessary for faith and practice.
- believe in and practice interpretive skills from an historical, evangelical and Reformed point of view. These include knowing and using the historical and literary context, the grasp of OT & NT theology, and the ability to faithfully apply the Scriptures to the needs and hopes of humanity.
- Able to use Scripture effectively in preaching, teaching, pastoral care and evangelism.

4. Reformed theology and tradition

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

The candidate shall

- demonstrate an understanding of the doctrines of the church and how they have emerged over time in the context of the church's interaction with culture.
- show an awareness of and commitment to a Reformed creedal and confessional understanding of the church's tradition.
- show how a consideration of the church's doctrine can assist the church in its mission and its engagement with non-Christians, and people of other faiths.
- be able to apply Reformed doctrine, government and worship to the pastoral and outreach ministries of the church.
- articulate a Reformed understanding of worship substance and style.

5. Church history

Demonstrate a working knowledge of the history and teachings of the Christian church, including her government and worship.

The candidate shall

- be familiar with the major persons, movements, and historical events in the history of the church. Special emphasis is to be given to the Apostolic, Patristic, Reformation, and Modern periods of the church.
- articulate major issues that have arisen over time in the following areas: the variation of Christian doctrine; the internal organization and structure of the church and its offices; the expansion of Christianity and its encounter with other faiths; and the changing views of the relationship between church and society.
- reflect theologically on issues currently facing the church, with special attention to their historical context.

6. Knowledge of and adherence to the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (the Government, the Standards and the Liturgy)

Demonstrate a functional understanding and adherence to the government, Standards, and liturgy of the Reformed Church in America.

The candidate shall

- demonstrate an understanding of and appropriate adherence to the RCA confessions (Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort, and Belhar Confession), *Book of Church Order*, and *Liturgy*.
- articulate an understanding of Reformed polity in relationship to other forms of church government, and the unique elements of Reformed church order.

7. Nature and administration of the sacraments

Demonstrate understanding and skill for the administration of the sacraments that is theologically Reformed and contextually relevant.

The candidate shall

- show knowledge of distinctive elements of the Reformed theological tradition, including its theology and administration of sacraments.
- demonstrate a commitment to an appropriately Reformed practice of infant and adult baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- understand the place and significance of worship, including the celebration of the sacraments.

8. Ability to preach

Demonstrate understanding and skill to lead worship and preach the gospel.

The candidate shall

- demonstrate the ability to preach and teach the whole of Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit, with clarity, winsomeness, and passion.
- demonstrate an approach to preaching and teaching that evangelizes and nurtures.
- demonstrate a practice of worship and use of liturgy that is biblical, Reformed, and appropriate to the context.

9. Capability to minister within the church

Demonstrate the understanding and skill required to lead the people of God in faithfulness to their mission, including the areas of discipleship, evangelism, and leadership.

The candidate shall

- give evidence of an understanding of approaches to discipleship and capacity discipling individuals toward multiplication and maturity of faith in Christ.
- demonstrate, either through personal experience or by undergoing training, the ability and commitment for nurturing others to embrace faith in Christ, and to maximize and multiply the church's effectiveness in evangelism.
- show understanding of the principles and practices of church leadership, both in theory and practice.
- demonstrate the strategic dimensions of leadership, including vision formation, management skills, coping with change, and critical evaluation of self and program.
- show ability to lead in a way that meaningfully engages the cultural context and needs of the wider community.

10. Understanding of and adherence to pastoral ethics and practices

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

The candidate shall

- give evidence of appropriate care and empathy toward persons in various crises.
- show a grasp of the challenges and opportunities emerging in the various stages of life.
- exhibit an understanding of the psychological and social forces that shape human behavior.
- demonstrate the ability to offer accountable spiritual counsel with appropriate boundaries, utilizing the resources of faith and forgiveness.
- show an ability to refer to appropriate community and professional resources.
- exhibit sufficient emotional and psychological health and self-understanding to care for others in a healthy way.
- show capacity for self-care, including appropriate use of outside mentors, coaches, and/or counselors.