

Process Guide For Classical Examinations For Commissioned Pastor Classis Wisconsin, CRCNA (Adopted by Classis, September 2021)

Introduction:

Church Order Article 23a states that *“the task of the commissioned pastor is to bear witness to Christ through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, church education, pastoral care, evangelism, and other ministries in order that believers may be called to comprehensive discipleship and unbelievers may be called to faith.”* Recognizing that this is a position of great responsibility within Christ’s church, the Church Order Supplement to this article further states that *“all commissioned pastor positions must be approved by classis, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, to determine whether or not the position fits the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001. All commissioned pastors must demonstrate, through an examination, their ability to function in the ministry to which they are being called.”*

This document has been written to help commissioned pastor candidates in their journey through the examination process within Classis Wisconsin. Please note that the scope of this document is **intentionally** narrow, focused primarily on the classical examination itself. The requirements for the office of commissioned pastor continue to develop and change, and as such, both the potential applicant and the calling church must assume a great deal of responsibility in ensuring that all elements of preparation have taken place prior to examination.

These elements are spelled out in much greater detail in the denomination’s Commissioned Pastor Handbook. While this guide will refer to them in passing, it is **essential** that applicants and their calling churches read the Handbook closely, in order to be properly informed. The Handbook, along with several supporting documents, is available at the Candidacy Committee’s website at <https://www.crcna.org/candidacy/commissioned-pastors>.

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Timeline of Overall Process

The calling of a commissioned pastor can be an exciting time in the life of a church, as the position represents the potential for new or expanded ministry. The classical examination process is one way that Classis recognizes the importance of this position, and can be a means by which the churches of Classis support one another, encourage one another, and hold one another accountable.

That accountability extends to the denominational level as well. Unlike a license to exhort exam, the examination process for a commissioned pastor requires the involvement of the denominational Candidacy Committee, as well as “synodical deputies”—representatives from neighboring classes—at various points in the examination process. This reflects the truth that as a commissioned pastor, you serve and represent not only your own church but the denomination as a whole.

As mentioned earlier, it is **essential** that the calling church and the applicant read through the denominational Commissioned Pastor Handbook in its entirety to be aware of the various requirements leading up to the examination. However, for the sake of clarity, the essential steps to the process are presented below in timeline form.

One to Two Years from Examination

- The local church recognizes a ministry need which requires ordained leadership.
- The possible applicant is encouraged to become part of the Classis Wisconsin Leadership Development Network to receive training and support. While this is not required, it is strongly encouraged, as it both orients the candidate to the Christian Reformed Church and helps them develop relationships within Classis Wisconsin.

One Year to Six Months from Examination

- The local church informs the Clerk of Classis of their intentions. The Clerk informs the local church leadership of the elements of the commissioned pastor ordination process.
- The candidate is referred to the Classis Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT), which will have an intake interview with the candidate, discern their readiness to continue the process, and arrange for a mentor for the candidate. If the candidate is to be serving as a solo or senior pastor position, they will also, in consultation with the denominational Candidacy Committee and the local church, help the candidate to develop a contextualized learning plan and ensure that a criminal background check and a psychological evaluation are carried out, as according to synodical regulations.

Six Months from Examination

- The local church leadership develops a formal job description for this position. According to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, elements of this job description should include:
 - a. A description of the functions and responsibilities that are ministerial in nature,

- b. A description of the supervision and lines of accountability for the position, and,
- c. A specific note of whether preaching or administering the sacraments are included in the position. Examples of job descriptions are found on the above-mentioned website. This job description should be approved prior to the day of examination by the denominational Candidacy Committee.
- If the job description is for a commissioned pastor serving in a solo or senior pastor position, there are additional requirements:
 - a. When an individual is being called to serve in a solo or senior pastor position, a “contextualized learning plan” must be developed by the applicant and the calling church, in consultation with the CMLT, the Classical Interim Committee, and the Candidacy Committee. The Candidacy Committee must approve this learning plan before the examination can proceed. Examples of learning plans are available on the above-mentioned website.
 - b. Additionally, as noted above, Synod 2018 ruled that all Commissioned Pastors called to a solo or senior pastor position must undergo a criminal background check and a psychological evaluation. These should ordinarily be completed no less than six months from the proposed date of examination.
- If the above requirements have been met, and the CMLT sees no reasons for concern, the candidate will be introduced by the CMLT at the Classis meeting prior to their examination. At this meeting the candidate will be interviewed concerning their calling, understanding of ministry, and spiritual journey.
- If the job description involves preaching, the candidate will have the option of presenting a sermon at the classis meeting, on a text assigned by the CMLT.
- If the candidate does not choose to present their sermon at the classis meeting, they will preach it prior to the Classis meeting at which they will be examined, in the calling church of the applicant. Two ordained members of Classis shall attend the worship service in order to report on the sermon at the Classis meeting. More information regarding the requirements of the Classical sermon is available below.

One to Three Months Before Examination

- If the aforementioned elements are in order, the applicant will begin to meet with the pastor or individual who will be leading their Classical examination. The examiner should meet or make contact with the applicant at least twice before the examination. More details about the examination are available below.
- Prior to the Classis meeting, the calling church should present the following documents to the Clerk of Classis. This should take place no less than a month prior to classis. The Clerk of Classis, in turn, will make them readily available to the classical delegates for approval on the day of the examination:
 - a. A council recommendation from the church in which the applicant holds membership.
 - b. Evidence in the form of diplomas, transcripts, or the like, of formal general education or specialized training in the ministry area to which the candidate is being called.

- c. A letter from the calling church establishing the need for the position, along with a position description, as well as a copy of the letter extended to the applicant.
- d. If applicable, presentation of a contextualized learning plan. *Note: While they are not required to concur as to the examination itself, the synodical deputies must concur with the classis as to the adequacy of the job description, and, if applicable, the learning plan. This must be done by the synodical deputies prior to the classis meeting, and must be in writing.*
- e. A copy of the applicant's letter of acceptance.

Day of Classical Examination

- If the job description includes preaching, and the candidate has not previously presented a sermon at classis, the evaluation of the sermon that took place in the applicant's calling church will take place in the presence of the applicant.
- The applicant is examined by the examiner. (See below for details and guidelines). If they sustain the examination, notification of the date of their installation service is made available to the classis.

To the Applicant:

We are glad that you are making this step in pursuing your calling! As noted above, the office of Commissioned Pastor is a dynamic and rapidly developing office within the CRCNA, and a wide variety of individuals are called to ministry in this way. Not every step of this process may apply to your individual situation. However, we ask you to be diligent in reading through this entire guide to ensure that all aspects of your ordination process are addressed.

If you are at this point in the process, then you are likely in ongoing conversations with your calling church, or may already be serving them in some capacity. Please continue to be in contact with them to help ensure all relevant elements of this process are completed.

Checklist of Responsibilities:

- Meet with the Classical Ministry Leadership Team for an initial interview.
- If you are being called to a senior or solo pastor position, develop a contextualized learning plan in consultation with the denominational Candidacy Committee, the CMLT, and the council of your calling church.
- Obtain a letter of recommendation from the church in which you hold membership as to your suitability for this position. As this may be the same as your calling church, this step will not be necessary in all cases.
- If applicable, undergo a criminal background check and a psychological evaluation with a Classis approved counselor.
- Meet with Classis Wisconsin to be introduced. Your Classical Sermon may be preached at this first meeting. If not, see below.
- Write letter of acceptance to the church to which you are being called. This will be made available to classis at a later date. Furnish the Clerk of Classis with evidence of general education or specialized training in the area to which you are called in the form of diplomas, transcripts and the like.
- Meet or make contact with Classis Examiner (2x) to prepare for examination.
- If applicable, receive assigned text from the CMLT and prepare and present Classical Sermon prior to your examination at Classis. Meet after giving of sermon for feedback with the assigned sermon examiners.
- Prepare for Classis examination in consultation with Clerk of Classis, the CMLT, and Classis Examiner. More information regarding the Classical examination is available below.

To the Applicant's Calling Church:

As noted above, the calling of a commissioned pastor is an important event in the life of a local church. This individual will not only serve within the local church but may also serve the classis or the denomination as a whole. Therefore, the churches of classis play an important role in helping the local church discern the qualifications and suitability of an applicant for this position. These steps towards ordination are not just "hoops" that an applicant and church must jump through, they are a key part in the process of discernment. Difficulty navigating these steps may be an opportunity for both the applicant and calling church to re-evaluate and reconsider if a particular applicant is the right fit for serving in a church in the CRCNA. On the other hand, completion of these steps may be the means by which that call is encouraged and affirmed. In either case, please know that the churches of Classis Wisconsin are upholding you in prayer as you navigate this process.

Please note that while Church Order allows for a Commissioned Pastor to serve as a solo or senior pastor, it does so **by way of exception**. Such a position is ordinarily held by someone who is ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament. Any Commissioned Pastor called to this position will now be required to complete a robust learning plan which in some cases will be equivalent to earning a Master's of Divinity degree. Please include this factor in your discernment as well.

The Commissioned Pastor Handbook outlines some of the qualities that are called for in someone being called to this office. Prior to the beginning of any formal process the council of the calling church should reflect on these qualifications when it comes to an individual they may be considering. Are they familiar with and in agreement with the Reformed Confessions? Do they have the proper gifts and abilities when it comes to the calling for which they are being considered? Are these qualities confirmed by others in the congregation or in places where they have previously served?

If these or similar questions can be answered in the affirmative, then the following tasks are to be completed. Several of these will be done in coordination with the applicant themselves:

Checklist of Responsibilities:

- Inform the Clerk of Classis of your intentions. The Clerk will inform you of the next steps in the process. Please do this in a timely manner in order to ensure that other elements will have time to be completed and that the Clerk of Classis and the Classis Ministry Leadership Team will be able to coordinate other parts of the process.
- Develop a job description for the position. Elements of a good job description are noted above. Furnish the denominational Candidacy Committee with a copy of this job description for approval prior to the Classis meeting.
- Extend a letter of call to the applicant regarding the outlined position.

- If the position is to a solo or senior pastor position, be aware of the additional responsibilities which this involves. These include but are not limited to:
 - A contextualized learning plan for the applicant which must be developed in concert with Classis leadership and approved by the denominational Candidacy Committee.
 - According to Synod 2018, a criminal background check and a psychological evaluation must take place in these cases.
- If the position involves preaching, then the applicant must also present a sermon, most likely at the church to which they are being called, on a text assigned by Classis, which will be examined by sermon examiners appointed by Classis.
- Present to the Clerk of Classis the documents noted on p.4, for distribution to the delegates of the upcoming Classis meeting.
- Both the Classis sermon, if applicable, and the Classis examination itself are essential ways in which Classis is able to discern the qualifications and suitability of the applicant for the position, and for their possible Classical and denominational roles. Therefore, encourage the applicant to adequately prepare for the examination and enable them to have sufficient time and opportunity to do so.

Responsibilities of Classical Representatives

As stated before, the process of becoming a Commissioned Pastor is a complex one that involves input from the denomination and classis as well as the local church. To help guide an individual through this process well, it's essential that the responsibilities of the various classical representatives involved are clearly defined.

The Clerk of Classis

The Clerk of Classis will likely be the initial point of contact for churches and individuals seeking information about the process of ordaining a commissioned pastor. He can explain the overall process in broad terms and direct interested parties to denominational and classical resources. All necessary paperwork and documents should be sent to the Clerk of Classis throughout the process. The Clerk, however, will refer the individual applicant to the Classical Ministry Leadership Team, who will guide them throughout the rest of the process.

The Classis Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT)

Intake Interview: After the Clerk informs the CMLT of a potential applicant, the CMLT will then meet with the individual as soon as possible. The purpose of the meeting will be to get to know each other and talk through the process as outlined in this document in greater depth. The candidate should prepare a short biography, an explanation of their sense of calling and a summary of their philosophy of ministry for this meeting.

Mentor for Applicants: Individuals applying for Commissioned Pastor ordination will be set up with a mentor to walk with them through the process. For an individual serving in a solo or senior pastor role, the mentor will ordinarily be a pastor from a different church within the classis. For those serving in a traditional commissioned pastor role, supervised locally by a Minister of the Word, their supervisor may serve as the mentor. The mentor will walk with the applicant through the process, discerning readiness, providing support, and providing updates to the CMLT. Responsibility for setting up the mentoring relationship will be that of the CMLT and will be done in consultation with the applicant at –or following—the intake interview.

Documentation: For those applicants being called to a solo or senior pastor position, the CMLT will promptly ensure that a “contextualized learning plan” is being developed by the candidate in consultation with the denominational Candidacy Committee. The CMLT will also ensure that the applicant undergoes a criminal background check and psychological evaluation, as per synodical regulations. The results of the background check and evaluation, after being made available to the CMLT, will be held by the Clerk of Classis.

Two Stage Process: The initial elements of this process may raise reasons for concern or reevaluation. The CMLT will then counsel the candidate and their calling church accordingly. If the CMLT does not discern any reasons for concern regarding the candidate, and these initial documents are in order, the CMLT will introduce the candidate to the classis. In order to foster

stronger relationships between the candidate and the classis, this will ordinarily take place in over two meetings.

In the first meeting, the candidate will be interviewed by classis concerning their calling, understanding of ministry, and spiritual journey. The documents previously provided to the CMLT (biography, philosophy of ministry, and explanation of calling) may be distributed to the classis delegates. If the position also includes preaching, the candidate has the option of preaching their classically assigned sermon at the classis meeting. Otherwise, the classical sermon will be given in their own church at another time.

In the second meeting, if all the remaining paperwork has been turned into the Clerk of Classis and the synodical deputies concur as necessary, the candidate will undergo their classical examination. The CMLT will have the responsibility of assigning a classical examiner to the Commissioned Pastor candidate in a timely manner.

The Classis Sermon

If the job description of the commissioned pastor includes preaching, then the applicant is required to preach on a text assigned by classis. As mentioned above, this may take place at a classis meeting. However, the candidate may choose to preach the sermon at a regular worship service. If so, then, preferably on the Sunday before the meeting of Classis and in the applicant's calling church, the commissioned pastor should give the sermon, with two members of classis present to serve as sermon critics. These members should meet with the applicant after the sermon to give feedback, and write up their reflections to be presented at the Classis meeting. In the presence of the commissioned pastor, the sermon critics should evaluate the sermon and the way in which the entire worship service was conducted. A written copy of the sermon shall be provided to the classical delegates in advance.

Both the sermon critics and the delegates at Classis are tasked with reflecting on how well the sermon is a sound reflection of Biblical truth and Reformed confessional commitments. While preaching from an assigned text may limit your options, here are a few criteria that should guide your preparation and preaching.

The sermon should:

1. **Be in thorough agreement with Reformed theology and the confessions.** There should be nothing within your sermon that would cause people to question your understanding or loyalty to core Reformation perspectives.
2. **Be Christ-centered and not exemplary or moralistic.** Christ is at the center of Scripture and he should be at the center of your sermon as well. The sermon should steer clear of any application that is not firmly grounded on the finished work of Christ as savior.
3. **Be Redemptive Historical** (Awareness of the "big picture" of Scripture). If possible, the sermon should show how the particular passage being preached on fits within the scope of the larger story of scripture.
4. **Show a proper distinction between Law and Gospel.** The sermon should not be a sanctified self-help speech simply urging us to try harder. If that was all that humanity needed, Christ would not have come. If possible, it should show how "law" reveals to us our need for Christ, and how obedience is an outworking of our gratitude for what Christ has done.
5. **Be textually based.** The sermon should flow from a careful exegesis of the actual text. The text must not simply be a hook to hang the sermon on.
6. **Reflect an awareness of genre and context.** The sermon should show sensitivity towards how the specific genre of Scripture that the passage is written in (epistle, poetry, apocalyptic) should be interpreted, as well as an understanding of how its context helps to reveal its meaning.
7. **Be clear and organized in terms of its structure and application.** Listeners should not be confused as to the points that the applicant is making or what the applicant is calling them to do or to believe.

8. **Be engaging in terms of its presentation.** The sermon should be preached well, with good eye contact, proper inflection and intonation, and good use of illustration when appropriate.

Examination Guidelines for Applicant

Preparing for a classical exam is an important final step of completing the spiritual journey that began with God's original calling of you to the ministry. An exam is an opportunity to bring together years of study and reflection and communicate one's readiness for ministry. The purpose of the exam is to demonstrate deep understanding of biblical truth and Reformed doctrine, communicated in such a way that it clearly shows how it will guide your ministry. Because of this, one of the key marks of a good exam is clarity—clarity of understanding and expression in answering the questions. The focus of the exam is not upon how much Bible and theology you've memorized, but how well you understand and can express in your own words the central theological truths that form the foundation of Reformed ministry.

How can you best prepare for an ordination exam? An ordination exam is not something you can cram for the night before. Whether you realize it or not, your preparation and training for this exam have been years, maybe decades in the making. However, that doesn't remove the need for preparation. You should think of preparation for an ordination exam as a finishing step of your learning process.

The first thing that you should do is promptly contact the classis examiner designated by classis. Your examiner should meet with or contact you at least twice prior to the Classis meeting. They will talk with you about the exam process and do some initial assessment of your preparation for the exam, and perhaps make specific recommendations for your study. Since many of the doctrinal questions of the exam are drawn from the Reformed Creeds and Confessions, it is important that you read and are familiar with them. There are sample questions at the end of this document that can help orient you to the kinds of questions that will be asked.

It is left up to the discretion of each individual examiner whether they will give you the actual questions that they intend to ask you or will instead give a general sense of what topics they might explore with you. The Church Order Supplement for Article 32-a says that such an examination should include the following:

- A. knowledge of Scripture,
- B. knowledge of Reformed doctrine,
- C. Knowledge of the standards of the church and the Church Order,
- D. Practical matters regarding Christian testimony, walk of life, relationships with others, love for the church, approach to ministry, and promotion of Christ's kingdom.
- E. You will also be examined on the specific area of ministry to which you will be called.
- F. See the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, pp 12-14, for greater specifics in terms of the areas of qualification.

It's true that the classis is a church setting and not a classroom, and the examiners are not professors but pastors and ordinary lay people that have been delegated to classis as elders and deacons. Still, please remember that this is a true examination and not just a formality. Classis has the responsibility of making sure that all who hold the office of commissioned pastor are spiritually mature, appropriately gifted, and well informed. This examination is the main way in

which they will make that evaluation. There is the real possibility of failure and so we encourage you to adequately prepare.

Please also know that at every step of this process we are seeking to “set you up for success” when it comes to your examination! If at any time prior to the examination you do not feel that you have had enough contact with your examiner or are not adequately prepared, please contact the Clerk of Classis and your examination can be postponed or adjusted as necessary.

Guidelines for Classical Examiners

As a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the CRCNA and as a member of Classis Wisconsin, one of your responsibilities is to aid in the examination of applicants for commissioned pastor. In Classis Wisconsin we wish all Ministers to take regular turns in participating in such examinations so that the burden can be shared and not left to a few. We understand that ministry is often hectic and consuming, and, at the same time, want to underscore the crucial role that you play as an examiner in bringing about a positive outcome in this process.

Key to that positive outcome is ensuring that the applicant is properly prepared prior to the examination itself. This is a journey that has weighed heavily on the heart of the person being examined for a long period of time and we ask that you approach it with that same level of gravity and diligence.

To help ensure that, we recommend that you meet with the applicant twice prior to the examination itself as promptly as possible once you are assigned to them. If for some reason you are not able to meet face to face, we still encourage you to have at least two substantial conversations with them in another format. In these conversations you should:

1. Ensure that the process up to this point has been followed and that nothing has been overlooked.
2. Explain the specific process of the examination that will take place,
3. Do a prior evaluation of the applicant's theological and practical proficiency when it comes to the task that they are being called to, and
4. Encourage the applicant in their spiritual journey and pray with them.

Some pastors give the applicants the questions that they will ask them prior to the examination itself. Discussing these questions together is a clear way of discerning the applicant's level of preparedness and allows "red flags" to be dealt with in a private rather than a public setting. Others simply let the applicants know the general categories of the questions that they will be asking. We leave this to your own discretion, and ask only that you give enough time and focus to the process so that the applicant is adequately prepared. A poor examination reflects not only on the applicant but the examiner themselves.

Please see the previous page for additional guidelines concerning the examination. The Commissioned Pastor Handbook notes that examinations involving commissioned pastors are able to be more flexible than those involving Minister of the Word and Sacrament, and that the classis is "*free to contextualize the process regarding the number of examiners, the time set aside, or the timing in relation to the rest of the ordination process*" (p.16). However, in general, an hour should be set aside for the examination. Personal introductions take place prior to the examination itself as the pastor introduces the applicant, so please keep your own questions, as much as possible, to the specific topics relevant to the position.

As stated before, we leave the specific questions up to your discretion and ask only that they adequately reflect the necessary categories above. To help you in your own preparation a list of sample questions is included at the end of this document.

Sample Questions

Personal Calling and Character

1. Please describe your call to ministry. Why did you accept your current ministry position?
2. How have others encouraged you to take this step of service to the church?
3. Can you give examples of effective ministry that you've been involved in previously?
4. What practices of the Christian faith sustain you and deepen your obedience to Christ?
5. Describe your practice of prayer.
6. Do you have a favorite text that is a guiding principle for your life?
7. What do you see as areas of giftedness and strength when it comes to ministry? What are areas of ministry that you don't feel particularly gifted for?
8. How do you plan on keeping yourself fresh in the position to which you're called?
9. How will your ministry be evaluated? How do you handle criticism?
10. What books have you been reading lately to help you grow as a Christian?

Biblical and Theological Foundations

1. What is the central theme of Scripture?
2. Describe how you might lead someone who is not a Christian through Scripture to give them an understanding of God's plan of salvation.
3. Can you list some examples of different genres of Scripture and give us an example of each?
4. What is the message or theme of the book of Revelation? Genesis? Leviticus? Romans?
5. What is the difference in audience, message and purpose among the four gospels?
6. Where in Scripture might you find the doctrine of justification by faith?
7. Where in Scripture might you find the doctrine of unconditional election?
8. What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments?
9. If a young person or new believer wanted to begin reading the Bible for the first time where would you direct them and why?
10. What Biblical books or passages might you give someone who asked you what the Bible teaches about: worship, money, mission, following Jesus, God's love, God's judgement, other religions, racial reconciliation, capital punishment, abortion, the church, baptism, sexuality?
11. What theological lessons can be learned from the book of Job?
12. What books of the Bible might you study with someone if they wanted to learn about: sanctification, Israel's history, David, Elijah, the exile?
13. How are prophet, priest and king presented in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
14. Where in Scripture might you find support for the doctrine of the Trinity?
15. Sometimes we read how the Bible is "organically" inspired. What does that mean? How is it different from the ideas of mechanical or dynamic inspiration?
16. How could you prove the plenary inspiration of Scripture—that inspiration extends to every part of Scripture, even to the very words?

17. Can you outline for us some of the major Biblical covenants and where we might find them? How do these covenants point towards Christ?
18. Someone has said “We owe the canon of Scripture to the heretics”. What does this mean?
19. The Belgic Confession says that the Word functions as the regulation, foundation and confirmation of our faith—can you comment on this and what this means?
20. What is meant by the authority of Scripture? Clarity of Scripture? Perspicuity of Scripture?
21. We are a Reformed church and our approach to the Scriptures is called a redemptive historical approach, can you describe that for us?
22. If someone asked you what it meant to be Reformed in one sentence, what would you say?
23. What do we mean when we say that the CRC is a confessional church, and what is the role of the confessions in the church?
24. What are the Five Points of Calvinism and can you identify them Scripturally? Have you struggled with understanding or accepting any of these points of doctrine?
25. John Calvin said “without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God, without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self.” Can you explain what he was saying?
26. Suppose you were in a conversation with a Baptist friend of yours. How would you describe or defend the Reformed idea of infant baptism?
27. Suppose you were in a conversation with a Roman Catholic friend of yours. How would you describe or defend the Reformed idea of the Lord’s Supper?
28. Suppose you were in a conversation with a Pentecostal friend of yours. What would you have in common theologically with your friend and where might you draw some distinctions?
29. Does the Holy Spirit dwell in you and how do you know that he does?
30. Describe for us the Reformed doctrine of sanctification and how it might be distinct from some other traditions.
31. In Romans 5 Paul talks about Christ as the second Adam. What is the relationship between the first Adam and the second Adam and why is this important for understanding the Biblical message?
32. What is the Reformed doctrine of common grace and why does it matter? What scripture proof is there for common grace?
33. Someone tells you that the Bible can’t be trusted because the words have changed over the centuries. How might you respond?
34. Tell me a little about the connection between the church and Israel. Are there one people of God or two?
35. Someone says to you that they think that all religions lead to God and teach the same basic truths, how might you respond?
36. What are some of the dangers confronting the pulpit today and how does a Reformed theology guard against these?
37. What are some challenges that the gospel faces in this postmodern world?
38. What is the relationship between gratitude and the Christian life?
39. Do you consider yourself to be born again, and if so, what do you mean by that?

40. Describe the biblical concept of the kingdom of God. How do I get into the kingdom?
41. Why is the doctrine of sin important? What passages would you point out to give someone a thumbnail sketch of the doctrine of sin?
42. What is the cultural mandate?
43. What is general revelation and special revelation and what is the relationship between the two?
44. Why is the doctrine of the image of God in humanity so important?
45. Where in Scripture do we get support for the two natures of Christ? Why does Christ have to be both human and divine?
46. What is the gospel?
47. How would you define grace? What kind of misconceptions do you run into about grace?
48. What's the relationship between law and grace?
49. How have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your ministry?
50. What does it mean to quench the Holy Spirit? To be filled with the Spirit?
51. How does the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints have special meaning for you?
52. What role does preaching play in the life of a believer and what is the central purpose of preaching?
53. What does baptism really do for a Christian? What does it accomplish?
54. What would you do if someone in your church asked if they could be baptized again? What if someone in your church asked if they could have their baby dedicated instead of being baptized?
55. What does coming to the Lord's Supper actually do for Christians?
56. What is your basic understanding of admonition and discipline?
57. Describe briefly your theology of and approach to evangelism.
58. Some Reformed theologians speak of the states of Christ's incarnation. What are these?
59. Could Jesus return today? How does this hope affect your life?
60. Are we sinners because we sin or do we sin because we're sinners? Please explain.
61. What is the importance of the resurrection in the Christian's daily life?
62. Does God's grace force a person to choose against their will?
63. What's the difference between the active obedience and passive obedience of Christ?
64. When did the church begin? Please explain.
65. A friend tells you that there's one page in the Bible that's not inspired—the Table of Contents. He says that means that the church made the Bible and decided what books should be authoritative. How would you respond?
66. After a small group discussion on the Trinity, one of your members says "I've always found this stuff to be so confusing. I guess that it's what the Bible teaches. But what does it have to do with my life? What practical relevance does the doctrine of the Trinity have?" How would you respond?
67. A member of your church wonders why you never pray specifically for God to bless Israel. After all, he says, God told Abraham that whoever blessed Israel would be blessed. How would you respond?

68. After you preach a sermon about election, a member of your church comes up to you, upset. She says “every time I hear about election, it scares me. If God chose me, he chose me, if he didn’t, he didn’t. There’s nothing that I can do about it? But I don’t know if I’m elect or not. How can I tell?” How would you comfort her?
69. What is the difference between amillennialism, premillennialism and postmillennialism?
70. Would you please explain the meaning of “the world” in John 3:16?
71. What are the attributes of the true church? The marks of the true church?
72. What is the difference between the militant and the triumphant church?
73. What is the difference of the external call and the internal call?
74. Someone tells you that they’re afraid that they’ve committed the unpardonable sin. How would you counsel them from scripture?
75. What is the purpose of Jesus’ second coming?
76. How can you prove the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit? How can you prove that the Holy Spirit is a person and not just a force or influence?
77. What is the doctrine of providence and how does it relate to creation?
78. If someone says to you, “If there is a good God, then why is there so much suffering in the world”, how would you answer them?
79. Can you agree to cooperate with the guidelines of Synod as various decisions are made? How would you handle it if you had a disagreement over some issue?
80. What does it mean to say that the Bible is a “closed canon”?
81. What’s the difference between the Bible, Calvin’s Institutes, a beautiful sunset and your last sermon?
82. Do unbelievers have the image of God in them? In what sense?
83. How do you respond to the statement “believe and you will be born again”? How about “Believe in Christ and you will be saved”?
84. What’s the role of an elder and how does it differ from that of a deacon or a pastor? How is it the same?

Competence in Position to Be Filled

Based upon the job description and duties, there will be a section of the examination that will examine your practical theology of ministry, your skills in the area to which you are called, and your approach to dealing with various topics or issues that you might encounter in ministry.