Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC)

2021-22 Program Handbook

Program Director
Susan LaClear
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I. EPMC Overview and Purpose

The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) is designed for those who aspire to be ministers of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) and who are earning their Master of Divinity at a place other than Calvin Theological Seminary. This route for ministry is referenced in Article 6 of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church.

This program seeks to holistically prepare participants for ministry and meet the candidacy requirements established by the Synod of the CRCNA. The curriculum provides an orientation to the theology, history, and ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. In addition, vocational formation components prepare students with hands-on ministry experiences, mentorship and reflection.

The EPMC can be completed in residence each Fall at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan but is most often done via the non-resident online coursework option. The program is overseen by Rev. Susan LaClear, the Director of Candidacy for the CRCNA, with the vocational formation component directed by Dr. Geoff Vandermolen, Director of Vocational Formation at Calvin Theological Seminary.
II. Admission Requirements

To apply for the EPMC, students must currently be enrolled in or have completed an MDiv degree from a seminary accredited by The Association for Theological Schools (www.ats.edu). It is helpful for those currently enrolled in an MDiv program to apply for the EPMC early in their studies, preferably after completing one semester.

A. Deadlines

The in-residence EPMC is offered in Grand Rapids, MI each Fall semester. The non-resident program can begin anytime, with coursework commencing each Fall and Spring and Summer semesters.

Persons applying for Fall coursework must submit all admission materials, including recommendations, to the Calvin Seminary Admissions office by June 1. (Canadian participants applying for the residential program must receive an F-1 visa. To ensure adequate time to issue an I-20, applicants must complete a Declaration of Finances by May 1.) Those applying for Spring coursework must submit all materials, including recommendations, to the Calvin Seminary Admissions office by November 15.

B. How to apply

All who wish to enroll in the EPMC program should complete an application to the 24-month EPMC candidacy program, and also an application to Calvin Seminary for enrollment in the coursework of the EPMC. Application materials collected by Calvin Seminary will then be shared with the Director of Candidacy of the CRC and the EPMC admissions committee, as needed.

Complete an online Application including:

- A non-refundable $50 fee
- Three brief essays: personal autobiography, summary of ministry experiences, and statement of Christian commitment.
- Four recommendations: church council, pastor, classis/regional body, and personal. When applying, please be prepared with the names and contact information for these four references (not to include family members). Upon submitting the application, the Calvin Seminary Admissions office will send electronic recommendation forms directly to the references to complete.
- Submit all official transcripts
Applicants must request official transcripts from all prior colleges, universities, seminaries, and/or professional schools. Once admitted, students who are currently enrolled in seminary studies must submit unofficial transcripts to Calvin Seminary once a year in the summer. When the degree is completed, final official transcripts with the MDiv degree posted must be sent to Calvin Seminary. All transcripts should be sent to: Calvin Theological Seminary, Attn: Admissions 3233 Burton St. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546

After applying, please send a recent photograph to admissions@calvinseminary.edu with your name in the subject line. This allows the admissions office and the EPMC Facilitation Team to connect names with faces and be prepared to personally welcome you as you progress through the program.

Please note that non-native English speakers must submit TOEFL or IELTS scores.

- TOEFL: minimum internet-based score of 80 total with 23 in the writing section (use institution code 1096)
- IELTS: minimum score of 6.5 total with 6.5 in the writing section

C. GPA Standards

The GPA requirement for admission is 2.67 in MDiv coursework. Those who do not meet this standard may be admitted on probation. Note: To meet CRC candidacy requirements, students must have a minimum 2.85 GPA taking into account all seminary coursework, including EPMC.

D. Admission and Graduation Requirements

Standards for admission to the EPMC are the same as for those applying to the MDiv program at Calvin Seminary. Prior to admission, the EPMC Facilitation team, in consultation with the Calvin Seminary Registrar, will complete a transcript assessment, reviewing prior studies for completion of liberal arts courses as evidence of academic preparedness for theological education.

Applicants missing a broad-based liberal arts foundation (as determined by a transcript evaluation) may still be provisionally admitted to the EPMC with a learning plan. The EPMC Facilitation Team will communicate individually with such applicants about these requirements. Learning plans, developed in collaboration with the EPMC Facilitation Team, map out a path for participants to complete all requirements by the time they finish the EPMC. Options for completion of liberal arts courses include taking courses at accredited colleges/universities or developing an equivalent independent study to be engaged with a mentor.
III. EPMC Program Requirements

The EPMC includes both academic coursework and ministry participation components. As the denominational seminary of the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary provides the course instruction and vocational formation oversight.

A. Required Courses

The Calvin Seminary Registrar will register all enrolled EPMC participants for the first semester of studies. Those in the non-resident learning program are responsible for their own registration in subsequent terms. The following required courses are offered in residence each Fall AND online as noted:

- Hermeneutics (1 credit) – offered during August or online during J-Term
- Christian Theology in Reformed Confessions (3 credits) – offered online each Spring and Summer
- Christian Reformed Church Polity (1.5 credits) – offered online each Spring and Summer
- Christian Reformed Church History (1.5 credits) – offered online each Spring and Summer
- Preaching (2 credits) – offered online each Fall
- Digital Tools for Teaching and Preaching (1 credit) – a half semester online course offered each fall.

Individualized Learning Plans

We recognize that some who enroll in the EPMC program come from other Reformed seminaries at which they have already taken courses in Reformed Confessions and Reformed Hermeneutics. Some also enter the program with more than 5 credits of preaching from another seminary or extensive preaching experience. The participant’s credits and experiences can be discussed at their initial EPMC Facilitation interview, and an individualized learning plan will be developed to eliminate redundancy and provide the participant opportunity to test out of some required courses.

Note: All participants should contact Rev. Susan LaClear upon enrollment in the program so that an initial EPMC Facilitation team interview can be scheduled. The members of the team who are assigned to interview the participant initially will continue in conversation with him/her throughout the program, serving as discernment partners, guiding, encouraging, and giving support when needed.
Note: All EPMC participants must take a minimum of 9 credit hours at Calvin Seminary. In the case that the EPMC Facilitation team approves exemptions from some required courses and the remaining course schedule falls short of 9 credits, the participant can choose courses outside of the core EPMC curriculum to fulfill the remaining credits needed.

Note: Questions about exceptions or alternatives to the required courses should be directed to Rev. Susan LaClear (slaclear@crcna.org).

B. Bible Survey Course (3 credits) OR Bible Content Exam

Candidacy in the CRC requires a mature level of knowledge of Biblical themes and texts. EPMC participants may demonstrate this knowledge by completing the Bible Survey course or passing a Bible Content Exam.

Those who take the Bible Survey course must achieve a 3.0 GPA or higher to meet this requirement. The course is offered in residence each Fall semester and online each Summer semester. The alternative to the course is the completion of a 100 question exam. For details on this exam, please see Appendix I.

Those who complete a Bible Survey Course or a Bible Content Exam at a seminary judged to be reformed in nature will be allowed to receive credit for completing this requirement. Such a judgement is part of the EPMC admission and interview process under the guidance of the EPMC Facilitation Team.

C. Language competency

The Christian Reformed Church also values the ability to read and study Scripture with a working knowledge of the Biblical languages. Therefore, EPMC participants must demonstrate competency in the Biblical languages and the skills of exegesis by meeting the following requirements:

- Two graduate-level courses (6 credits) in Old Testament Hebrew studies
- Two graduate-level courses (6 credits) in New Testament Greek studies
- At least one graduate-level exegetical course (3 credits)

Many MDiv programs will incorporate these courses into their curriculum. If they are not available at the degree granting institution, EPMC participants may enroll in these courses at Calvin Seminary or another accredited seminary.
D. Vocational Formation components

In addition to academic coursework, the EPMC strives for whole-person formation for ministry by integrating every part of the learning experience. The Vocational Formation components work toward student growth primarily in three areas: pastoral identity, ministry practice competency, and accountability. Comprehensive goals for the vocational formation program are included in Appendix A. Oversight of the formational process embedded in the EPMC program is accomplished through a partnership between the EPMC Facilitation Team of the Candidacy Committee and the Vocational Formation Office at Calvin Theological Seminary. In consultation with the EPMC Facilitation Team, Dr. Geoff Vandermolen (Director of the VFO at CTS) works with participants to accomplish the following goals in the EPMC program:

1. A thorough psychological assessment

Calvin Seminary partners with trained psychologists to individually evaluate each student’s strengths and weaknesses with a view to increasing their personal self-awareness and effectiveness in pastoral ministry. The assessment guides students and seminary staff in maximizing personal learning and growth.

Assessments should be completed as early as possible in a participant’s program involvement. In many cases, students will have requirements arising from their psych assessment, ranging from completion of individual counseling, group counseling, clinical pastoral education, etc. Many participants find it very advantageous to work on these requirements as soon as they are known. This allows ample time for them to address recommendations. The Director of Vocational Formation works with each participant to complete all psychologist recommendations. Psychological assessments are arranged individually through Kenzie Szczepanski. (kcs065@calvinseminary.edu). The Director of Vocational Formation will inform students of requirements arising from this report, and monitor their completion.

In rare cases, as determined by the EPMC Facilitation Team in consultation with the CTS Vocational Formation Staff, assessments completed at other seminaries may sufficiently fulfill this requirement. Participants who have taken assessments in other settings may submit these materials to the CTS Director of Vocational Formation to determine their suitability for meeting the program purposes.

2. Mentoring Experiences

EPMC participants are mentored over a two-year period in their local community by a pastoral mentor and a regional mentoring team, who submit reports of the participant’s growth and progress to the Candidacy Director and the EPMC Facilitation Team.
3. **In-Context Learning (Internships)**

Participants must complete 600 hours (15 weeks full-time or its equivalent) of supervised ministry experience, which is guided by monitored goals, strategies and means of assessment, and which offers significant engagement with cross-cultural and pastoral ministry. All MDiv programs require internship experiences. However, in some cases students may be required to complete additional in-context learning to increase their total hours to 600. If possible, EPMC participants should collaborate with the Director of Vocational Formation before pursuing internships through other seminaries to ensure that EPMC program goals and requirements are met.

Participants who have begun or completed other internships, or who are currently serving in ministry roles, should proactively communicate with the Director of Vocational Formation to discuss whether the amount of time and range of ministry experiences are sufficient to satisfy EPMC internship requirements. For this conversation, students should prepare and gather: a concise summary of all ministry leadership and congregational internship experiences including the names and locations of ministries served, a description of ministry responsibilities, and any supporting documentation available (job descriptions, statement of objectives, self or council or supervisor evaluations, mentor reports etc).

If internships do not satisfy requirements, the Director of Vocational Formation in consultation with the EPMC Facilitation Team will construct a plan with participants by which suitable additional experiences can be completed and program goals achieved.

4. **Vocational Formation review**

The Director of Vocational Formation meets individually with each residential EPMC student to review the psychological assessment report, discuss internship experiences, and create a plan to satisfy any outstanding requirements of the formation for ministry goals. Non-residential students review this material with their appointed local mentor in consultation with the Director of Vocational Formation.

This meeting also includes a review of the six ministry practice areas (as outlined in the program goals, see Appendix A) to determine together the two areas of greatest strength and two areas of greatest weakness. These will be further addressed in the reflection paper.

5. **Vocational Formation reflection paper**

At the conclusion of their program, EPMC students must submit a reflection paper addressing the three program goals: pastoral identity, ministry practice competency and accountability. This
paper is due by Nov. 1st of the year prior to candidacy candidacy year and submitted as a Word document to slaclear@crcna.org. The reflection paper will be reviewed and sent to the assigned EPMC Facilitation team members to be discussed at their final interview.

The Reflection Paper should be approximately 12 pages in length, double-spaced. See Appendix A for background material on this paper. The paper should contain three sections:

**Pastoral Identity (approximately two pages)**
In light of the Pastoral Identity program goal, reflect upon your developing pastoral identity, understanding and confirmation of call to ministry, and personal spiritual formation.

**Ministry Practice Competencies (approximately 8 pages)**
In the two ministry practice areas identified as strengths, (1) summarize some of the practical ministry skills you have acquired in each ministry practice area, (2) reflect on how your ministry practice in this area has contributed to your own personal spiritual formation, and (3) reflect on how your call to ministry has been challenged, shaped, or deepened through your work in this ministry practice area.

In the two ministry practice areas identified as weaknesses, (1) summarize some of the practical ministry skills you have acquired in this ministry practice area, (2) describe the areas in which you most need greater competence and more experience, and (3) sketch out a possible plan for achieving such competence and experience in the coming three years.

**Accountability (approximately 2 pages)**
In light of the Accountability program goal, briefly describe a ministry situation in which you experienced tension or conflict with the supervising pastor and/or supervising body. Summarize some of the things you learned about yourself, ministry, and/or God through that experience.

E. Preaching

As EPMC participants are admitted into the program, they are granted licensure to exhort in the Christian Reformed Church. EPMC participants are required to preach and have evaluations completed on four different sermons at 3 locations prior to March of the year in which they intend to be declared a candidate. A sermon evaluation form is available in Appendix B, through the CTS Vocational Formation office, and on the CRCNA.org Candidacy resources page. (See document 2.5.5)
F. EPMC Facilitation Team Interviews

Near the end of the Fall semester, EPMC participants meet individually for a 1-hour interview with their assigned EPMC Facilitation Team members. The purpose of the interview is to allow the EPMC Facilitation Team members an opportunity to discuss the participant’s vocational formation reflection paper with them, and make a final assessment of (1) the student’s personal, spiritual and professional readiness for ministry, (2) the student’s knowledge of and agreement with the confessional positions of the Christian Reformed Church, and (3) the student’s general suitability for ministerial candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church. The team will then present their assessment of the participant’s readiness for candidacy to the Candidacy Committee before the participant’s final interview for candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church is conducted in April.

What to expect at the final candidacy interview:

- Introduction – the convener will clarify the purpose of the interview: a time to inform faculty of the student’s readiness for ministry and confessional soundness with a view to preparing a candidacy recommendation. The student’s 1-2-page case study report will be submitted.
- 15 minutes – the convener will ask questions regarding the candidate’s personal background, spiritual journey, and sense of vocation.
- 15 minutes – a faculty member will ask about the candidate’s Reformed identity, especially knowledge of and agreement with the Reformed Confessions and his/her willingness to sign the Covenant for Office-bearers.
- 15 minutes – a faculty member will converse with the candidate concerning the assigned case study, focusing on the candidate’s biblical/theological understanding as they inform pastoral sensitivities.
- Conclusion – the student will be excused for a brief time of panel deliberation addressing the student’s strengths and weaknesses and determine if the student passed or will need a follow-up interview. The student will return to hear panel feedback. A prayer of thanksgiving for the student and wisdom for the faculty will be offered.

Should a student not sustain the interview, a plan will be prepared to prepare the student for a follow-up interview.
IV. Costs

A. Tuition & Fees

Calvin Seminary will create account statements by the 25th of every month. Participants are expected to regularly review their accounts on Populi. Calvin Seminary does not send invoices.

Payments for tuition, fees, and any rent (for resident students) should be submitted to the Calvin Seminary Financial Services office or on Populi. If your balance is going to be paid by a church, classis, or other third-party but the payment will not be received by Calvin Seminary before the due date, you are required to work out a payment plan with the Financial Services Office.

For more information about student accounts, payment options, a payment plan form, or to make a payment, please go to the Financial Services page on Populi Links.

**Tuition Due Dates**

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<th>January Term</th>
<th>February 28</th>
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<td>May Term</td>
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<td>Summer</td>
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<tr>
<th>EPMC charge</th>
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<td>Tuition (2021-22 academic year)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Formation (Psychological Evaluation &amp;</td>
<td>$1,545</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Formation Assessment)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Books (estimate)</td>
<td>$400</td>
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</table>

If you have questions, please contact the Financial Services office at semfso@calvinseminary.edu or 616-957-8681.

B. Financial Aid

EPMC participants are not eligible to receive institutional financial aid from Calvin Seminary. Participants may seek financial support or scholarships from their own classis’ student fund or other sources at their own initiative. Costs updated 7/6/21
V. Candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church

In order to be a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, participants must meet the synodical requirements for candidacy through demonstrating academic, personal and professional readiness for ministry via the process described below. Participants who meet the candidacy requirements will be presented to the CRCNA Synod in June and are henceforth eligible for a call to ministry.

Participants may begin the final candidacy process if they are on track to complete all academic coursework (including learning plans) and vocational formation components by June of the following year. (Participants with 4 or fewer outstanding units by the time Synod meets may be considered delayed candidates - see section B below). The GPA requirement for candidacy is 2.85 taking into account all seminary coursework, including EPMC grades.

A. Candidacy Process & Required materials

An informational meeting will be held in September by the Director of Candidacy to outline candidacy requirements and deadlines. An audio recording of the meeting is made available.

By October 25th of the year before candidacy, participants who are on track and interested to candidate, must express their intent to the Candidacy Director (slaclear@crcna.org) She will notify candidate applicants of their assigned sermon text (see details below) and will compile a Candidacy Applicant List for all future communications.

All potential candidates must submit the following items: (Note: Detailed instructions about content, formatting and submission protocol for all required materials are emailed to students upon declaring their intent to candidate.)

- **Personal Disclosure and Background Check** - gives permission for a background check report to be run.
- **Biographical Sketch** – brief online form containing contact information, educational and internship experiences, and ministry intentions.
- **Authorization to Release information** – allows Calvin Seminary to release biographical sketches for the denominational website and other purposes (see Appendix C).
- **Two Sermons, One Video** - Two (typed, double-spaced) sermon manuscripts and supporting evidence: one on the assigned text and the other from a text of your choice (not one written for class work). Includes one video of the assigned-text sermon being preached. (See Appendix D)
- **Written faith journey** – a one-page statement about what the student believes and his/her process of faith formation.
• **Statement of reason** – a one-paragraph statement of reason for seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church.

• **Minister’s profile** – an important personal online profile submitted to the denomination’s Ministerial Information Service that facilitates the exchange of information between pastors and congregations (see Appendix E).

• **Photograph** – a color headshot to appear in The Banner, booklet for Synod, and other seminary and Candidacy uses. Professional dress is recommended.

• **Council recommendation** (due March 1) – the student’s minister or clerk of the council must complete this recommendation (see Appendix F).

• **Classis Recommendation** (due March 1 – a representative from the student’s classis must complete this recommendation (see Appendix G).

• **Mentor recommendation** (due March 1) – the student’s mentor must complete this recommendation (see Appendix H).

In the spring, all aspiring candidates recommended by the EPMC Facilitation Team must interview with the denominational Candidacy Committee. Interviews are conducted in Grand Rapids, in regional areas or via ZOOM, as arranged by Rev. Susan LaClear, Director of Candidacy.

**B. Delayed Candidacy**

The delayed candidacy policy allows students who cannot complete ALL requirements before June to still participate in the candidacy process (cf. Church Order Supplement, Art. 6). They must meet the following criteria:

A. Must have four or fewer incomplete units in their seminary program as of the synodical meeting where candidates are presented. Each course and internship is considered a “unit”. No more than one required EPMC Course may be remaining in June.

B. By synodical regulation, any delayed candidate who does not complete the remaining required units by March 1 of the year following the Synod where they were approved for candidacy must reapply for candidacy. (Church Order Supplement, Article 6 C.4).

C. Upon completion of all remaining requirements, the EPMC Facilitation Team, through the Director of Candidacy, will inform the Executive Director of the CRC, who will announce the candidate’s eligibility for call.
C. Communicating with churches

The denominational website (crcna.org) compiles information regarding candidates and potential candidates as part of the Ministerial Information Service (part of Pastor-Church Resources). In the spring of each year, basic information taken from candidate profiles is presented on a webpage of Potential Candidates. After Synod meets and officially declares the candidates for ministry, this information is transferred to the web page for Potential Candidates.

Potential candidates may talk with congregations, exchange information and discuss ministry philosophies. However, candidate applicants may NOT make a commitment to a church before Synod officially declares the candidates for ministry in June, nor are churches allowed to extend a call prior to Synod’s approval.

D. Frequently Asked Questions

What is the timetable for Synod declaring candidates and being eligible for call?
Synod usually declares candidates on Tuesday or Wednesday morning (usually the second Tuesday/Wednesday in June). Potential Candidates are asked, but not required, to be present for the Presentation of Candidates. The president Calvin Seminary and of Synod each make fitting congratulatory remarks, and delegates express their congratulations and joy both during the synodical session and at an informal reception held after the session. After this presentation at Synod, candidates are immediately eligible for a call.

What if I don’t receive and/or accept a call within 1 year of being declared a candidate?
Susan LaClear, Director of Candidacy, contacts all candidates every year in the month of March. She will help you process a request for extension of candidacy.

Should I apply for candidacy if I know I can’t accept a call in the year of eligibility?
If you are contemplating activity in the year after Synod declares you a candidate that will preclude you from taking a call (e.g. pursuing an advanced academic degree) you should wait until the following year to apply for candidacy. If you’re not sure about future plans, it is recommended that you begin the candidacy process so that you can keep your options open. You can always discontinue the process and begin again the following year.

Who are the members of the Candidacy Committee?
There are actually two committees. The denominational Candidacy Committee is presented on the CRCNA website (http://www.crcna.org/candidacy/about-committee). The EPMC Facilitation Team acts as a sub-committee of the denominational Candidacy Committee, and has the following members:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Member</th>
<th>Al Gelder</th>
<th><a href="mailto:gelderaj@gmail.com">gelderaj@gmail.com</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Rob Toornstra</td>
<td><a href="mailto:artoornstra@comcast.net">artoornstra@comcast.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Kang Won Kim</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pastorkim@yahoo.com">pastorkim@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Darrell Delaney</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ddelaney@madisonsquarechurch.org">ddelaney@madisonsquarechurch.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Jen Rozema</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jenr@faithcrc.org">jenr@faithcrc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Emily Vanden Heuvel</td>
<td><a href="mailto:evandenheuvel@crcna.org">evandenheuvel@crcna.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Candidacy</td>
<td>Susan La Clear</td>
<td><a href="mailto:slaclear@crcna.org">slaclear@crcna.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and/or CC member</td>
<td>Ashley Bonnes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bonnes.ashley@gmail.com">bonnes.ashley@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTS Reps</td>
<td>Joan Beelen</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jrb44@calvinseminary.edu">Jrb44@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ad hoc advisors)</td>
<td>Shawn Brix</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Srb08@calvinseminary.edu">Srb08@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
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</table>
VI. Checklists

A. EPMC Overview and Checklist

The EPMC is a denominational program for those who have earned an MDiv at other seminaries to become candidates in the CRC.

It is comprised of:
1. Coursework through Calvin Seminary
2. Mentorship with a local mentor
3. Connection events
4. Vocational Formation work
5. Candidacy Interviews and paperwork

GETTING STARTED

- Apply to the 24-month candidacy program.
- Apply to the EPMC track at CTS Online application due June 1 (Fall start) or Nov. 15 (Spring start) including:
  1. $50 non-refundable fee
  2. Three brief essays: autobiography, summary of ministry experiences, statement of Christian commitment
  3. Names and contact info for 4 references: church council, pastor, classis/regional body, and personal
  4. Four completed recommendations
  5. Submission of all official transcripts (Currently enrolled students: submit unofficial seminary transcripts each summer and final transcript after degree is posted). Transcripts are reviewed for GPA (2.67 minimum) and liberal arts prerequisite courses. Applicants who do not meet minimum requirements may be provisionally admitted and required to create a learning plan
  6. Recent photo (email to admission@calvinseminary.edu with name in subject)
  7. TOEFL or IELTS scores (non-native English speakers only)
  8. Declaration of Finances (International students only) due May 1, to obtain an I-20

- Determine who your CRC mentor will be and provide contact info for that mentor to the candidacy director
- Establish connection with the CMLT of a CRC classis, and inform the candidacy director who that contact person is
Note: the 24-month “clock” starts ticking once you have established and reported your mentorship and classis connections, so do this as soon as possible.

Contact the Candidacy Director, Rev. Susan LaClear, at slaclear@crcna.org to set up an initial interview with EPMC Facilitation Team so that your individualized learning plan can be developed.

Individualized learning plans will be formed with consideration to the previous education and experience of each student. Each plan will be designed to cover the elements below, and all will include 9 credit hours through Calvin Seminary,

- Reformed Confessions and Creeds (3 credit course)
  
  Participant may take advanced placement test ($125 fee) to test out
- CRC Polity (1.5 credit course)
- CRC History (possible 1.5 credit course)
  
  Participant may take advanced placement test ($125 fee) to test out
- Knowledge of Scripture demonstrated through 3 credit Bible Survey Class at CTS or other Reformed seminary
  
  Successful completion of the Bible Content Exam at CTS or at another reformed institution will also fulfill this requirement.
- Reformed Hermeneutics course at CTS (1 credit) or a Reformed seminary
  
  Participant may take advanced placement test ($125 fee) to test out
- Biblical Interpretation Skills with Original Languages (potential 15 credits)
  
  6 credits Hebrew, 6 credits Greek, 1 additional exegetical course
- Preaching
  
  Completion of at least 5 credits of accredited preaching courses
- Pastoral Care, Leadership and Well-Formed Character
  
  Demonstrated through vocational formation requirements below
- Peer Support Network
- Liberal Arts competence

THE TWO-YEAR TRACK

1. Mentoring Requirements

- Meet with mentor every month for 24 months.
  - Mentor must provide the candidacy office with 7 Mentor Reports (one initial report plus 3 reports each year)
- 3 Touch-points with your classis (i.e. classis or CMLT meetings, or other conversations depending on the classis’ preference)
  - Classis must provide the candidacy office with 3 Classis Reports (one initial report plus two others)
2. **Connection event requirements**
   - “Trip #1” (for non-resident students)
   - “Trip Event #2 (various options available)

3. **Vocational Formation requirements**
   Make initial contact with Dr. Geoff Vandermolen at CTS to talk through these requirements gav016@calvinseminary.edu.
   - Preaching
     - License Given upon Admission to EPMC
     - In consultation with mentor present a report that four different evaluated sermons have been presented in at least 3 distinct settings, due March 1 of candidacy year (report part of mentor recommendation for candidacy – see below)
   - Psychological Assessment reviewed with mentor and completion of any recommendations. Contact Kenzie Szczepanski (kcs065@calvinseminary.edu) to begin the process of psych assessment.
   - Vocational Formation experiences
     - Congregational internship: 600 hours of supervised ministry experience and any additional requirements
     - Vocational Formation Reflection Paper, due to Dr. Geoff Vandermolen by Nov. 1st of the year preceding participant’s candidacy year

### THE “LAST LAP” TOWARD CANDIDACY APPROVAL
- Attend informational meeting in September (audio recording available for non-residential students)
- Express intent to candidate to the Candidacy Office by emailing Rev. Susan LaClear (slaclear@crcna.org)
- Submit all forms and paperwork to Jill Stark (jstark@crcna.org)
  - Background Check and Disclosure Form
  - Biographical Sketch
  - Authorization to release information
  - Sermon manuscripts, notes, and digital video of assigned text
  - Sermon manuscripts and notes for text of own choice
  - Council Recommendation
  - Mentor Recommendation
  - Classis Recommendation
  - Written faith journey
□ Statement of reason
□ Minister’s profile
□ Photograph

☑ Complete Abuse of Power Training (email ekas@crcna.org to get started)
☑ Complete EPMC final interview
☑ Complete all academic, vocational formation, 24 month mentoring and “last lap” requirements
☑ Complete Candidacy Interview
☑ Attend presentation of candidates at Synod in June (optional)

You are now a candidate for ministry in the CRCNA!
## VII. Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Info</th>
<th>Send questions regarding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Susan LaClear</td>
<td>616-308-5417 <a href="mailto:slaclear@crcna.org">slaclear@crcna.org</a></td>
<td>Unique situations/exceptions  Any areas not addressed below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Candidacy, CRCNA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Einfeld</td>
<td>616-957-7035 <a href="mailto:admissions@calvinseminary.edu">admissions@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>Application for Admission  Application deadlines  Recommendation forms  Submitting transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin Seminary Admissions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Dr. Geoff Vandermolen</td>
<td>616-957-6045 <a href="mailto:gav016@calvinseminary.edu">gav016@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>Vocational Formation  Psychological Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Vocational Formation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise Mokma</td>
<td>616-957-6083 <a href="mailto:drm046@calvinseminary.edu">drm046@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>Schedule Bible Content exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Registrar and Academic Services Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenzie Szczepanski</td>
<td>616-957-6173 <a href="mailto:kck065@calvinseminary.edu">kck065@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>Schedule Psych. Assessment  Candidacy process &amp; deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Services Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin Seminary</td>
<td>616-957-8619 <a href="mailto:semsfo@calvinseminary.edu">semsfo@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>Payment amounts &amp; deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Bruinsma</td>
<td>616-957-8618 <a href="mailto:housing@calvinseminary.edu">housing@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>On-campus housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Beelen</td>
<td>616-957-6027 <a href="mailto:jrb44@calvinseminary.edu">jrb44@calvinseminary.edu</a></td>
<td>Transcript evaluation  Learning plans  Registering for courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Dean of Academic Services and Registrar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A: Vocational Formation Program Goals

The Vocational Formation component of the EPMC program seeks to achieve the following three Program Goals:

A. Pastoral Identity
In the context of supervised congregational ministry, participants will grow in and demonstrate their (a) personal spiritual formation, (b) understanding and confirmation of call to ministry, and (c) theological reflection upon ministry, pastoral identity, and the church.

B. Ministry Practice Competencies
The 16 ministry practice areas listed below serve as a guide for congregation, supervisor and participants as they assess the participant’s strengths and weaknesses, set goals and provide ministry leadership opportunities for the student, and evaluate the student’s readiness for ministry.

1. Preaching and Teaching
   a. Preach sermons that are biblically faithful, creative, authentic, contextually sensitive, and life changing
   b. Teach using a variety of methods so that the message will be clearly received and understood by particular audiences

2. Evangelizing
   a. Tell the story of God’s grace at work in my life in a lively and engaging way
   b. Model a life of hospitality within a community, welcoming people and paying attention to their needs in ways that communicate God’s grace
   c. Model outreach as a way of life in a local congregation and communicate a vision and strategy for church planting
   d. Engage inquirers and people from other faith traditions with a clear biblical explanation and defense of the Gospel and Christian worldview

3. Pastoral Care
   a. Offer compassion, exhortation, forgiveness, and Christ’s presence to people at all stages of faith formation so that they become more fully devoted followers of Jesus
   b. Assess, guide, and counsel people within the boundaries of a pastor’s expertise, referring them to other professionals as appropriate
   c. Guide people in a moral way of life and hold them accountable
4. Worshipping
   a. Prepare and lead worship that glorifies God and helps people to encounter God
   b. Collaborate with others in the process of preparing for, leading, and evaluating worship

5. Seeking Justice and Serving
   a. Model a life that embodies principles and practices of biblical justice
   b. Educate and mobilize people to serve as advocates for peace, racial reconciliation, and benevolence, both locally and globally

6. Leading
   a. Lead a congregation, local community, and/or individuals through ordinary and celebratory times and through times of crisis, transition, conflict, and loss
   b. Provide alternative styles of leadership according to various needs and settings
   c. Encourage and train others to use their gifts in appropriate ministry practices

C. Accountability
In the context of specific structures of accountability provided by mentor and/or supervising pastor, and congregational leaders or committees specifically charged with supervisory responsibility, students will demonstrate their ability to (1) honestly assess their own strengths and weaknesses; (2) graciously receive feedback from their mentor, supervising pastor and/or congregation, and respond appropriately; (3) work effectively within given structures of authority and accountability; and (4) set realistic formation goals and achieve them.

[Self-Assessment Form on Six Ministry Practice Areas](pdf)
Appendix B: Sermon Evaluation Form

You can download the Sermon Evaluation Forms from the Calvin Theological Seminary website at:

https://www.calvinseminary.edu/church-resources/pulpit-supply
Appendix C: Authorization to Release Information

I hereby authorize Calvin Theological Seminary to release Biological Sketch information and photograph to the following:

- The “potential candidates” for ministry for the coming year web page maintained by the CRCNA
- CRCNA archives
- Synod booklet
- Announcement of call to CTS community

Name: _____________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Guidelines for Candidacy Sermon Preparation and Submission

PREAMBLE
The Candidacy Committee desires to impress upon those applying for candidacy to the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, the importance of satisfactory sermonic material. The following requirements become guidelines for the preparation and submission of sermons and also for judging the acceptability of the sermon.

GUIDELINES
The candidate shall submit a manuscript of the assigned sermon text (texts were assigned in the email following your intent to candidate). Please feel free to adjust the assigned pericope (either more verses or fewer verses) as you judge appropriate, and inform Rev. Susan LaClear (slaclear@crcna.org) of any such adjustments.

1. The sermon shall include the following supporting materials:
   a. An exegetical study to include word study, grammar, and contextual analysis (minimum of two pages).
   b. A summary of the major moves of the sermon [(what some would call an outline) minimum of one page].
   c. List of commentaries consulted.

2. The sermon shall meet the following criteria:
   a. Sermons will be judged by the standards set forth in the Faculty Working Statement on the Nature of Excellence in Preaching.
   b. Sermons should be typed, double-spaced, with no less than one inch of margin all around, and 12 pt. font size.
   c. All pages, exclusive of the title page, must be numbered.
   d. The file name must include the candidate’s name, and if the text was assigned or non-assigned. Example: “Szczepanski, Kenzie Assigned Sermon on Matthew 22:34-40”
   e. Sermons should be faced with a title page, giving the title or theme; the textual reference; if the text was assigned or non-assigned; the author's name; and the date.
   f. The minimum length of the manuscript is 2,000 words.
   g. The sermon shall be one prepared for and delivered in public worship.

3. The candidate shall also submit a manuscript of a sermon from a text of his/her choice. The sermon of choice must be based on a text from the testament of the Bible other than the assigned text. **Points 1. and 2. above also applies to this sermon of choice.**
   a. The sermon shall be one prepared for and delivered in public worship.
b. The sermon shall not be one prepared for and delivered as a class assignment.

4. A video of the assigned sermon must also be submitted and uploaded on the shared Google Drive folder along with the sermon manuscripts, so that the evaluator can evaluate the student's delivery readily.

5. The above requirements must be fulfilled by \textbf{January 24} of the year in which candidacy is applied for. All materials must be submitted electronically in an email to Jill Stark or directly uploaded on the shared Google Drive folder.
Appendix E: Minister Information Profile

You will receive an email from the CRCNA’s IT team in the fall approaching your hopeful candidacy approval. This email will give you log-in instructions to create your CRCNA minister profile. You are strongly encouraged to fill out your profile by February 22, which will then enable churches to contact you. If you do not wish to be contacted, you may leave the “Make My Profile Visible to Churches” box unchecked on the profile form. You can then update your profile in the future as your career progresses and your situation changes.

About the Minister’s Profile: The Minister’s Profile provides important information to the Ministerial Information Service, a denominational service that facilitates the exchange of information between pastors and congregations looking for pastors. Even if you already know where you will be serving you are still encouraged to complete this profile for future information sharing. Congregations regularly ask the Ministerial Information Service for information on specific pastors and can be better served by having the information on you provided by this profile.

If you have questions, please contact profiles@crcna.org.
Appendix F: Council Recommendation for Candidacy
(Due March 1 in the year in which the person is seeking approval of Synod for candidacy)

Applicant Name: ____________________________________________________________

Church Council: ____________________________________________________________

Church Address: ____________________________________________________________

1. How long has your church known this applicant, and what connections have you had with the applicant in the past three years?

2. Can you affirm that this person has demonstrated the requisite leadership ability, spiritual gifts, spiritual and moral integrity, love for Christ and his people, and a Reformed commitment necessary for flourishing in ministry? Please explain.

3. Are you able to offer an unqualified recommendation for this person’s candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church? ______ Yes ______ No
   *Please offer comments relative to your response

4. (optional) You are welcome to offer any additional comments about this applicant, using the space below or via attachment of additional pages.

Signature: ___________________________________ Date: ________________

Date Processed in Council: ________________________________________________

Save a copy of this completed form for your records, and then send it to:
1. Rev. Susan LaClear, Director of Candidacy (slaclear@crcna.org)
2. Jill Stark, Candidacy Administrator (jstark@crcna.org)
Appendix G: Classis Recommendation for Candidacy

(Due March 1 in the year in which the person is seeking approval of Synod for candidacy)

Applicant Name: ________________________________________________________________

Mentor Name: _________________________________________________________________

Classis Representative Name: ___________________________________________________

Classis Representative Position: _________________________________________________

Date of Report: ________________________________________________________________

1. Has the classis representative/team been in consultation with the mentor regarding the progress of the applicant toward candidacy? (If not, please check in with the mentor before completing this form.)
   _____ Yes   _____ No
*Please offer comments relative to your consultation

2. Are you able, on behalf of your classis team, to give an unqualified recommendation for this person as a candidate for ordination as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA?
   _____ Yes   _____ No
*Please offer comments relative to your response.

3. This report form was reviewed with the student prior to submission to the Director of Vocational Formation on ________________________________ (date).

Save a copy of this completed form for your records, and then send it to:
   1. Your Classis CMLT Representative
   2. Rev. Susan LaClear, Director of Candidacy (slaclear@crcna.org)
   3. Jill Stark, Candidacy Administrator (jstark@crcna.org)
Appendix H: Mentor Recommendation for Candidacy

(Due March 1 in the year in which the person is seeking approval of Synod for candidacy)

Applicant Name: ________________________________________________________________

Mentor Name: _________________________________________________________________

Date of Report: ________________________________________________________________

Question #1 is for EPMC students only, as CTS students have sermons reviewed through the Calvin Seminary MDiv program.

1. One candidacy requirement entrusted to the mentor is to review the evaluations of at least four sermons with the candidacy applicant (the four sermons must represent at least three different locations) and then to report completion of this requirement to the persons listed at the bottom of this form.
   a. Please list the four dates and the places at which the applicant preached evaluated sermons. (Note that the list must represent at least three distinct locations or venues. The list can be given on this document, or on an attached document or email)
   b. Are you able to testify that you have reviewed evaluations and discussed these preaching experiences with the applicant, and indicate that you believe the person is ready for candidacy relative to their preaching skill? _____ Yes _____ No
      Comments:

2. Can you affirm that this person has demonstrated the requisite leadership ability, spiritual gifts, spiritual and moral integrity, love for Christ and his people, and a Reformed commitment necessary for flourishing in ministry? Please explain.

3. Are you able to give an unqualified recommendation for this person as a candidate for ordination as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA? _____ Yes _____ No *Please offer comments relative to your response.

4. This report form was reviewed with the student prior to submission to the persons listed below on ________________________________ (date).

   Save a copy of this completed form for your records, and then send it to:
   1. Your Classis CMLT Representative
   2. Rev. Susan LaClear, Director of Candidacy (slaclear@crcna.org)
   3. Jill Stark, Candidacy Administrator (jstark@crcna.org)
Appendix I: Bible Content Exam

Information Sheet for Test-Takers

A key value of the Christian Reformed Church for all ordained ministers is a basic working knowledge of the Bible. To ensure that all candidates meet this standard, the Candidacy Committee requires all prospective candidates to successfully complete a 3 credit Bible Survey course at Calvin Theological Seminary or pass a Bible Content Exam which is designed to assess one’s knowledge of stories, themes, and pertinent passages in the Old and New Testaments.

Registering for the Exam: Before taking the Bible Content exam, test-takers will need to find a proctor (a non-CTS professor, a pastor, or a church secretary) who will monitor the test-taking and can verify that no unauthorized materials were used during the exam. Test-takers will be required to supply the name, title, and email of their proctor (who will be given a security code to open the exam) to Denise Mokma (drm046@calvinseminary.edu).

The 100 multiple-choice question exam may be taken at any time. Prospective candidates may take the exam free of charge the first time. For subsequent attempts, prospective candidates will be required to pay a small administrative fee ($50). The exam may be re-taken as many times as needed with a minimum of one month between attempts.

Taking the Exam: To access the exam, simply click on the link entitled Bible Content Exam on the website (Bible Content Exam Canvas Site) you are directed to through your email and have your proctor enter the security code. Once the exam is started, test-takers will have 75 minutes to complete it. Those for whom English is not a native language or who are entitled to learning accommodations can request more time. During the testing period, test-takers are not permitted to consult any print or digital materials (either stored locally on the computer or on any network), including but not limited to Bibles, dictionaries, commentaries, notes, charts, or timelines. At the end of the exam, students will be asked to affirm that they have not used any unauthorized materials during the exam (for exact statement, see “Expectations regarding Honest Conduct” below). Once the exam is submitted, test-takers will immediately receive their score. In order to pass the exam, test-takers must receive a score of at least 70 out of 100. Test-takers are encouraged to review their graded exam to discern areas of strength and areas of growth in Bible knowledge.

How to Prepare for the Exam: The best way to prepare for the exam is to read the Bible and familiarize yourself with the contents of each book. Reviewing the notes at the beginning of each book of the Bible in a study Bible can be especially helpful for this. Additionally, practice exams can be found at http://www.whitneyhq.com/biblecontent/.
Technology Glitches: Technology isn’t perfect. Sometimes computers crash and the internet fails. If this happens while you are taking the test, please log back in and resume your exam. If you have any problems with this, please contact Denise Mokma (drm046@calvinseminary.edu).

Expectations Regarding Honest Conduct: Test-takers may not refer to any print or digital materials (either stored locally on the computer or on any network) during the testing period. Furthermore, they are not permitted to consult with other test-takers about the exam before, after, or during the testing period.

By way of reminder and for purposes of accountability, test-takers will be asked to affirm their compliance with these standards at the end of the exam. This online affirmation has the same force and expectation as the test taker’s signature on a page.

The specific “Affirmations” are as follows:
I recognize and affirm the high standard of conduct expected of anyone called to and engaging in the preparation and practice of ordained ministry. As such, I hereby acknowledge the following with regard to submission of my Bible Content Examination:

1) I attest that while taking this examination I have not used unauthorized material, including but not limited to:
   - material copied or viewed from personal notes (my own or anyone else’s);
   - material obtained by consulting databases, networks, or other electronic communication while taking the Bible Content Exam;
   - direct reference to the Bible in any print or electronic form.

2) I have not received and I will not share information that discloses the content of exam questions or my responses by any means of personal or remote communications (telephone, email, text, social media, etc.) to others during the day I take the exam.

Questions? For all questions and concerns, please contact Denise Mokma (dmr046@calvinseminary.edu)