

## **COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY**

### **The Presbytery of Los Ranchos**

#### **Final Examination of Candidates for Ministry**

##### **Purpose for Questioning Candidates for Ordination**

The examination of a candidate should be for the purpose of assessing the knowledge and information he/she possesses, to stimulate the candidate's thinking, and to determine the candidate's level of maturity in preparation for the ministry. It is a time to verify his/her understanding of the foundational truths of our faith, the identification and understanding of the importance or relevance of the three written components supporting our faith (Bible, Book of Confessions, and Book of Order). It is also an opportunity to reinforce the candidate's self concept by allowing and encouraging him/her to fully participate in, and contribute to the ongoing discussion of our faith. This means that the questions used need to be adapted to fit the purpose.

Given the time constraints, and in the realization that this is the last of the candidate's formal preparatory steps, while all forms of questioning are probably legitimate, it would seem that it would be most appropriate to limit questions to those which allow the candidate to demonstrate the ability to draw upon and apply the knowledge and understanding of the tenets of the Presbyterian faith acquired by his/her training, study, and life experiences. -- that the "rightness" or "wrongness" of answers can be determined through the logic, rationale and insight demonstrated in the candidate's responses.

Presbytery needs to consider the quality of the questions we ask. Take time to read/study the candidate's Statement of Faith --carefully formulating questions clearly stated and avoiding ambiguity (What about the resurrection? Yeah, what about it??) Questions also need to be singular in subject.

Avoid questions that are so complicated and detailed that they only serve to confuse the candidate when he/she attempts to identify what type of thinking operation the question calls for. Also avoid Gotcha' questions -- tricky or divisive or appear combative. It is also a time to avoid questions that are too clinical, too intellectually detailed, deep philosophical/theological in nature. And above all, avoid speculative questions with little or no religious relevance.

##### **Examples of Types of Questions to Consider**

**Yes/No type** are not very productive unless they also expect words of affirmation, denial/rejection, elaboration on choice of response: ("Do you believe the Holy Spirit resides within all people?" "Is abortion wrong?")

**Construction type** which requires information (scenario) from which the respondent is to construct an answer: (Young couple (strangers) want to have baby baptized. Mother was baptized and attended church up to age ten. Father has no religious background. What would be an appropriate response /course of action?)

**Convergent type** which stimulates explanation, association, discrimination, formulation, and illustration.

**Factual Recall type** depends on the level of thinking required.

(NOT “Who was John Calvin?” BUT “What is the impact of John Calvin’s life on the reformed church?”)

**Open type:** Often gives opportunities for a wide range of responses that are considered acceptable.

(“If you wanted to establish an alternative form of worship, what elements would you include in it?”)

**Closed type:** Using acquired information and/or knowledge.

(What must a person do to receive God’s forgiveness?)

**Divergent type:** Allowing the candidate to generate his/her own steps, processes, procedures.

(“How can a person modify their heart in order to...make it a suitable home for the Holy Spirit ...to allow them to express love for God – their spouse?”)

**Evaluative type:** To explain a situation, propose a possible outcome

(may lead to justifying a position)

(Why would you say that a terminal illness/disease did not come from God.? What are some of your reasons for calling drug abuse a sin?)

**Final Thoughts:** Keep in mind when questioning a candidate it is appropriate to:

Ask the candidate to expand on responses if he/she provides short or fragmentary answers.

Ask the candidate to repeat and amplify if the response needs clarification.

Ask the candidate to theologically justify a previous response. (“Upon what basis did you form this conclusion?”)

Be willing to wait for thinking to take place. Allow the candidate to take the amount of time required for him/her to respond to the best of their ability.

Avoid repeating the question unless the candidate requests it.

### **List of Possible Reformed Theology Questions for Candidates**

What is your understanding of mission?

What is your understanding of the authority of scripture?

What is your understanding of grace?

What is your understanding of judgment?

What is your understanding of what it means to be “Reformed always reforming”?

Share three ways reformed tradition views atonement and share which one you prefer.

What do you value about John Calvin?

What do you value most in the reformed tradition?

What does your understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ have to do with your day to day care for the people of God?

What does baptism signify--and share your understanding of the sacrament?

What would you include in a Eucharistic Prayer?

If God is sovereign, why does evil take place in the world?

What do Presbyterians mean when we say God is sovereign?

What do you believe about predestination/election?

Are human beings inherently good or inherently bad? Explain.

Why do Presbyterians engage in social ministry?

What does it mean that human beings are stewards of God's creation?

What is your definition of the Church?

How does reformed theology deal with non-Christian religions?

If the chief end of God's people is to glorify and enjoy God forever, how do we do that?

What's the difference between the ordinations of elders, deacons, and ministers of Word and Sacrament?

How is Christ present in the Lord's Supper and share your understanding of the sacrament?

Why is the Trinity monotheistic?

Why do Presbyterians value the Old Testament even though Jesus is not mentioned in it?

What is your understanding of the virgin birth?