

GUIDELINE FOR THE SELECTION OF SEMINARIES

This guideline has been developed by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry in response to the question “how do I know if a seminary is ‘acceptable’ to the presbytery?” – a question prompted by G-14.0450c in our *Book of Order*. This document is offered as a beginning point in the consideration of appropriate institutions, as an individual prepares to enter a Master of Divinity degree program. The “Guideline” is intended to be a resource to the presbytery, its ministers and sessions, when individuals seek guidance before beginning the process of preparation for ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, in covenant relationship with the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy.

Rationale:

This guideline serves our commitment as a denomination to nurturing the personal, professional, and spiritual integrity of those whom God has called to ministry. Our responsibility to the church is to support the development of gifted and effective pastors committed to the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as articulated in the “great ends of the church” (G-1.0200):

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God
- the maintenance of divine worship
- the preservation of the truth
- the promotion of social righteousness
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

Criteria guiding selection:

1. The seminary is accredited by *The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada* (ATS).
2. We encourage the seminary to be one of the ten (10) PCUSA theological seminaries or a seminary of a denomination in full communion with the PCUSA (The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Reformed Church in America, The United Church of Christ). The list of the PCUSA seminaries can be found on line at www.gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/seminaries.

The presbytery shall exercise responsibility for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates . . . to give guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and with the confessions, practical training and plans for education including the choice of institutions. . . .
The Book of Order G-14.041

Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy

3. The ethos and teaching of the institution is congruent with the Reformed tradition and with the tenets of the PCUSA, including
 - a. The Interpretation of Scripture (W-2.2001)
 - b. The acceptance of ordination of women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament (G-6.0105)
 - c. The incorporation of contextual/field education that helps the student integrate theological education with the praxis of ministry (G-14.0412)
 - d. Faculty and students living in a community of learning where life together embodies Christ's incarnation in a community of faith whose members are accountable to one another (G-3.0401 b.)
 - e. The practice of open and critical thinking about doctrine which aims at faith formation (G.1.0305, G.3.0401)
 - f. The diversity of faculty, administration, and student body (G-4.0400; G-9.0104 a.)
 - g. Ecumenical orientation and commitment (G-4.0203, G-15.0100)
 - h. Core curriculum which offers courses in Hebrew, Greek, Presbyterian history, theology, and form of government (polity) (G-14.0450c, G-14.0431).

The polity of the PCUSA is consistent in its understanding of the covenant nature of the preparation for ministry process, and of the role of the presbytery in guiding, evaluating, and supporting individuals preparing for ordered ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder). Individuals wishing to consider a Master of Divinity program at a theological education institution that is neither PCUSA nor a Formula of Agreement partner may request a consultation with the CPM to discuss why he or she feels another program is a better option for him or herself. Every request will be considered against the criteria outlined above, and the CPM will offer its decision and guidance in response to the particular request. If permission is granted to a student to pursue a Master of Divinity program at a seminary or divinity school not included within the presbytery's guideline, the CPM will report the decision, and the rationale and education plan supporting it, to the presbytery.

The presbytery shall exercise responsibility for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates . . . to give guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and with the confessions, practical training and plans for education including the choice of institutions. . . .
The Book of Order G-14.041