

**Regional Synod of Canada**  
**Commissioned Pastor - Guidelines and Procedures**  
**2009**

The following guidelines and procedures have been developed by the Commissioned Pastor Ad-hoc Committee of the Regional Synod of Canada. We thank the members of this committee for their diligent and faithful work.

Note: While we offer these guidelines to the Classes with the Regional Synod, each Classis has the authority to follow these guidelines, amend them or use other guidelines in the process of training, commissioning and supervising Commissioned Pastors.

A commissioned pastor is an elder who is trained, commissioned, and supervised by a classis for a specific ministry within that classis that will include the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. The commission shall be valid for the period of assigned service.

Because of the localized nature of a commissioned pastor's call to service and the complete authority of the local classis over the commissioned pastor, different training plans and ministry usages are in place throughout the United States and Canada. All commissioned pastor designations, however, must conform to the specifications of the RCA Book of Church Order. (Appendix A)

These specifications include required competencies:

“The classis shall satisfy itself that the candidate exhibits ministry competence in 1) maturity of faith, 2) personal integrity, 3) understanding of the Old and New Testaments and biblical interpretation, 4) Reformed theology, 5) church history, 6) knowledge of and adherence to the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (the Government, the Standards, and the Liturgy), 7) nature and administration of the sacraments, 8) ability to preach, 9) capability to minister within the church, and 10) understanding of and adherence to pastoral ethics and practices.”

The following standards are to be adhered to: (Detailed explanation in Appendix B) Personal Faith and Evangelism

Call  
Scripture.  
History and Theology  
Reformed Tradition  
Church Polity  
Leadership.  
Pastoral Care  
Worship and Preaching

When an inquiry is made by an individual who is interested in being a Commissioned Pastor, it is important to explain what is involved before they complete an application.

It should also be understood that the person does not become a Commissioned Pastor until the process is completed.

**The following process is to be followed:**

1. Completion of Application by Candidate and Local Church. (Appendix C)
2. Review of application by Classis Committee responsible for Pastoral Candidates. This includes a visit with the candidate to assess God's call and intended ministry. Check out and file transcripts etc. for future reference.
3. Candidate completes a personal profile such as the "Uniquely You," which assesses their suitability for the intended ministry by identifying their DISC personality profile and spiritual gifts types. (<http://www.uniquelyyou.net/giftedness/index.php>)
4. Committee approval of the Candidate, to be ratified by Classis. The Classis Care Committee will ask the Candidate to give a personal testimony before the Classis.
5. The Classis Care Committee will discuss with Candidate a possible Mentor(s), negotiate with and assign a Mentor.
6. The Classis Care Committee will discuss and agree on process among the Candidate, Mentor and Classis Care Committee, including initial assessments (such as the PCUSA biblical knowledge exam) expectations, required areas of study, timetable, costs, etc.
7. The candidate enrolls in Mentor-approved courses or programs of study (recommended are Western Theological Seminary's Distance Learning Courses (Appendix D) and/or MFCA Intensives (Appendix E) or the NBTS certificate in theological studies program (Appendix F) in order to prepare for the Classis examinations.
8. Classis examinations will be given in the following required areas of competency...

Personal Faith and Evangelism  
Call  
Scripture.  
History and Theology  
Reformed Tradition  
Church Polity  
Pastoral Care  
Worship and Preaching

The exams will be oral and will be conducted by the Mentor and a person appointed by the Classis Care Committee.

9. The standard for leadership will be met by the Candidate reading and reporting to the Mentor on two books on leadership. These books will be chosen by the Mentor in consultation with the Candidate. A list of suggested books is found in Appendix G. Alternatively, the Candidate may attend and report on a leadership training event (conference, workshop) approved by the Mentor.

10. If the Candidate is working in ministry before he/or she is commissioned, the church or ministry will be required to send quarterly reports to the Classis Care Committee on the effectiveness of the Candidate in the ministry.

11. When the Candidate has completed the above requirements, the Classis will vote on his or her Commissioning, as recommended by the Mentor and Classis Care Committee.

12. Classis will provide the Candidate with a formal document/certificate stating the training received and readiness for commissioning.
13. Classis will approve and oversee the signing of the contractual forms with the hiring ministry.
14. The Classis shall commission the Candidate to the ministry .
15. Classis will review the commissioning on at least an annual basis.

## Appendix A

### Commissioned Pastors: Book of Church Order Chapter 1. The Government Part II. The Classis

#### **BCO: Article 14. Commissioned Pastors**

##### *Sec. 1.*

A commissioned pastor is an elder who is trained, commissioned, and supervised by a classis for a specific ministry within that classis that will include the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. The commission shall be valid for the period of assigned service.

##### *Sec. 2.*

A consistory may recommend a confessing member of a Reformed church to the classis as a candidate to become a commissioned pastor.

##### *Sec. 3.*

Upon acceptance of the consistory's application on behalf of a candidate, the classis shall approve and supervise a training plan for that person. The classis shall satisfy itself that the candidate exhibits ministry competence in 1) maturity of faith, 2) personal integrity, 3) understanding of the Old and New Testaments and biblical interpretation, 4) Reformed theology, 5) church history, 6) knowledge of and adherence to the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (the Government, the Standards, and the Liturgy), 7) nature and administration of the sacraments, 8) ability to preach, 9) capability to minister within the church, and 10) understanding of and adherence to pastoral ethics and practices.

##### *Sec. 4.*

The classis shall employ standards established by the General Synod Council in determining a candidate's ministerial competence.

##### *Sec. 5.*

Upon satisfaction by the classis of the candidate's ministerial competence, the classis shall identify the specific form of commissioned service appropriate to the gifts and training of the candidate. When the classis receives an invitation for a ministry it deems appropriate for the candidate, the classis shall 1) authorize the ministry, 2) approve a contract, and 3) commission the candidate to the authorized ministry to the extent of the contract.

*Sec. 6.*

The classis shall assign a Mentor for each commissioned pastor for the period of training and ministry.

*Sec. 7.*

The commissioned pastor shall be authorized to preach the Word and celebrate the sacraments. The classis may authorize the commissioned pastor to any or all of the following functions:

- a. Serve as presiding officer of the consistory, at the request of a consistory or with its consent, under the supervision of the classis supervisor.
- b. Preside at the ordination and installation of elders and deacons.
- c. Perform a service of Christian marriage when approved by consistory and subject to Province and provincial law.

*Sec. 8.*

The commissioned pastor shall be a temporary member of classis, but shall not serve as an elder delegate, during the period of commissioned service.

*Sec. 9.*

The classis shall evaluate the performance of the commissioned pastor at least annually.

*Sec. 10.*

Upon completion of the authorized ministry by a commissioned pastor, the classis shall provide to that person a written Statement of the training received and the ministry that was performed.

*Sec. 11.*

The commissioned pastor shall remain a member of a local church, but is amenable solely to the discipline of the classis as set forth in Chapter 2, Part I, Article 3 of the *Book of Church Order*, for the period of commissioned service.

## Appendix B

### Standards for Commissioned Pastors: Explanations

Preamble The eight standards for commissioned pastors in the RCA listed in this document are printed in dark print and further defined in italics (*BCO* 1.II.14, Sec. 4). The expanded explanation following each of the eight named standards point to the competence necessary in character, knowledge and skills for the work of pastoral ministry by a commissioned pastor in the RCA.

When the commissioned pastor candidate, by learning and practice, can demonstrate competence in these standards, the classis may review, examine and authorize the candidate for commissioning to a pastoral ministry within the bounds of the classis (*BCO* 1.II.14, Sec. 5).

#### #1 Personal faith and evangelism

Standard: *Demonstrate a mature personal faith in Jesus Christ and commitment and skill in nurturing others to embrace that faith.*

The candidate by word and deed shall

- express an abiding and growing faith in, and love for Jesus Christ,
- demonstrate a life of prayer, a healthy relationship to God and other persons, and involvement in small groups and congregational life.
- exhibit a spiritual maturity that is witnessed in a Christ-like life, humility and openness to correction, a sensitivity and care for other people, and an understanding and practice of discipleship.
- demonstrate, either through personal experience or by undergoing training, the ability to lead persons to faith in Christ, and to maximize and multiply the church's effectiveness in evangelism.

#### #2 Call

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

The candidate shall

- articulate a biblical, personal, and Reformed call to ministry as prompted by the Holy Spirit and as attested by others.
- demonstrate servanthood, measured by growth in God's grace, as well as evidence of a fruitful ministry.
- understand the expectations, boundaries, and opportunities of ministry outlined in Scripture and the *Book of Church Order*.
- exhibit a Reformed vision for ministry embracing the local congregation, classis, and the greater church.

#### #3 Scripture

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

The candidate shall articulate an understanding of biblical authority consistent with the doctrinal standards of the

RCA.

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

#### **#4 History and Theology**

Standard: *Demonstrate proficiency in understanding the history and teachings of the Christian Church, and insight in their interpretation.*

The candidate shall

- be familiar with the major persons, movements and historical events in the history of the church. Special emphasis is to be given to the Apostolic, Patristic, Reformation, and Modern periods of the church.
- demonstrate an understanding of how major doctrines of the church have emerged over time, in the context of the church's interaction with culture.
- show how a consideration of the church's history and doctrine can assist the church in its mission and its engagement with non-Christians, and people of other faiths.

#### **#5 Reformed Tradition**

Standard: *Demonstrate a working knowledge of and a commitment to Reformed doctrine, government and worship.*

The candidate shall

- demonstrate an understanding of and appropriate adherence to the RCA confessions, *Book of Church Order*, and *Liturgy*.
- articulate a Reformed understanding of worship substance and style
- articulate an understanding of Reformed polity in relationship to other forms of church government, and the unique elements of Reformed church order.
- show knowledge of the distinctive elements of the Reformed theological tradition, including its theology of the church and sacraments.
- be able to apply Reformed doctrine, government and worship to the pastoral and outreach ministries of the church.

#### **#6 Leadership**

Standard: *Demonstrate the understanding and skill required to lead the people of God in faithfulness to their mission.*

The candidate shall

- show understanding of the principles and practices of church leadership, both in theory and practice.
- demonstrate the ability to relate contemporary leadership practices to the order, doctrine, and life of the church.

- demonstrate, either through personal story or case study, a practical understanding of how leadership is defined and exercised in specific cases.
- show a basic awareness of the strategic dimensions of leadership, including vision formation, management skills, coping with change, and critical evaluation of self and program.
- lead in a way that meaningfully engages the cultural context and needs of the community.

### **#7 Pastoral Care**

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

The candidate shall

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

### **#8 Worship and Preaching**

Standard: *Demonstrate understanding and skill to lead worship, preach the gospel and administer the sacraments.*

The candidate shall

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



**Appendix C**

**CANDIDATE'S APPLICATION COMMISSIONED PASTOR PROCESS CLASSIS OF \_\_\_\_\_  
REGIONAL SYNOD OF CANADA**

***PERSONAL INFORMATION***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX #: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Membership: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year Joined: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_  
Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Your present  
occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

***FAMILY INFORMATION***

Marital Status:  
\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_ Engaged \_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_ Remarried Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Currently employed? \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_ If applicable,  
please list their names and ages below. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Age \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

**EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

List educational institutions (high schools, colleges, universities) that you have attended, including any from which you did not graduate. Please attach transcripts or request copies to be sent from any educational institutions that you attended after high school.

Name of School	Location	Years Attended	Degree Received

List any conferences, seminars, or training you have attended in the past five years

List the books you have read in the past 12 months (*all types*) List the magazines and/or periodicals you read on a regular basis (*all types*)

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY/WORK EXPERIENCE**

Please list all employment since college/university (*high school if did not attend these*), including periods of unemployment.

<b>Employer</b>	<b>City/Province</b>	<b>Position Held</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>

**CHURCH/MINISTRY EXPERIENCE**

Please provide church ministry positions and experiences you have had where you have served (*i.e. elder, deacon, small group leader, Sunday School teacher, youth staff*)

<b>Position</b>	<b>Church</b>	<b>City/Province</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>

**LIFE STORY AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEY**

Please write and attach a brief autobiography (about two pages) including significant events in your life and a description of how you came to know Christ and where that decision has led you.

***CREDO (STATEMENT OF BELIEF)***

Please write and attach a brief Statement outlining (about two pages) your understanding of God and His relationship with us.

***CALLING AND CONFIRMATION***

Who have been some of the writers, Christian leaders, or Mentors, that have most influenced your spiritual journey and in what way?

What natural and spiritual gifts has God given you?

What confirmation have you discovered in using your spiritual gifts?

Describe your motivation, vision and call to become a commissioned pastor.

To what specific form(s) of ministry do you sense that you are being called?

Who would you suggest to serve as a Mentor for you in this process?

**REFERENCES**

In addition to the minister and consistory of your church, please provide the names of three individuals who can serve as references for you. These individuals should come from a variety of relationships (church member, colleague at work or school, teacher, friend, etc.) and be familiar with your call to ministry, your ministry experience, and spiritual gifts. These references may be contacted.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

I hereby apply for admission to the Commissioned Pastor Program of the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_ and the Regional Synod of the Canada. If accepted, I will commit myself to participate fully in the assessment process and training plan approved by the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_. In understanding that successful completion of this assessment and training, examination and approval by the classis is necessary before I can be considered for commissioning as a Commissioned Pastor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate's

*Send this form to the appropriate committee in your classis for consideration*

**PERSONAL REFERENCE COMMISSIONED PASTOR PROCESS CLASSIS OF \_\_\_\_\_ REGIONAL  
SYNOD OF CANADA**

My Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation for \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time I have known the applicant \_\_\_\_\_ My  
relationships to the applicant \_\_\_\_\_ colleague \_\_\_\_\_ friend \_\_\_\_\_ pastor \_\_\_\_\_ teacher \_\_\_\_\_ family  
member \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ I know this candidate \_\_\_\_\_ very well \_\_\_\_\_  
well \_\_\_\_\_ fairly well \_\_\_\_\_ minimally

*If you have had insufficient opportunity to observe the candidate, leave the following questions blank.*

I believe this candidate has a call into ministry \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ still in the discovery process \_\_\_\_\_ no

I believe this candidate has significant gifts for ministry \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ still in process of emerging \_\_\_\_\_ no

List three spiritual gifts that you see in the applicant

This candidate has leadership skills and the ability to influence people for God

\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ emerging leader \_\_\_\_\_ no

This candidate is a person of integrity, conviction and spiritual maturity \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ growing as a disciple \_\_\_\_\_ no

This candidate has a heart for lost people and seeing individuals come to faith in Christ \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ still in process of  
emerging \_\_\_\_\_ no

This candidate has a desire to learn and grow \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ developing desire \_\_\_\_\_ no

This candidate has a commitment to practicing spiritual disciplines \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ increasing commitment \_\_\_\_\_ no

This candidate has an ability to work well with and relate to people \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ developing people skills \_\_\_\_\_ no

Please provide examples of ways the candidate has proven to be both faithful and fruitful in his/her ministry context

1.

2.

The greatest strengths this candidate brings to serving in ministry are:

1.

2.

3. Areas of growth that need more development in the life and ministry of this candidate

1.

2.

Additional Comments

Would you recommend this individual to enter the process of becoming a Commissioned Pastor within the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_ Highly Recommend \_\_\_\_ Recommend \_\_\_\_ Do Not Recommend

Your Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Send this form to the appropriate committee in your classis for their consideration.*

**CONSISTORY RECOMMENDATION COMMISSIONED PASTOR PROCESS CLASSIS OF \_\_\_\_\_  
REGIONAL SYNOD OF CANADA**

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation for \_\_\_\_\_

Length of applicant's confessing membership in this church \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Confession \_\_\_\_\_

Has the applicant been ordained as an elder? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no deacon? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

If yes, year of ordination as an elder \_\_\_\_\_ as a deacon \_\_\_\_\_

Upon commissioning, would your consistory be willing to submit this candidate to the congregation to be ordained as an elder-at-large? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

List leadership activities that this candidate has fulfilled in this church

In what other ways has this candidate demonstrated a personal commitment to Christ and significant gifts for ministry?

What are the greatest strengths this candidate brings to serving in ministry?

What are some areas of growth that need to be further developed in the life and ministry of this candidate?

We believe this candidate has been called to the following type of ministry

Do you recommend this individual to enter the training process for becoming a Commissioned Pastor within your classis and the Regional Synod of Canada? \_\_\_ highly recommend \_\_\_ recommend \_\_\_ do not recommend



Will you commit to support and encourage this candidate in ministry and leadership development as this candidate seeks  
To become a Commissioned Pastor? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

Is this church able to provide a learning environment for ministry or do you recommend that the candidate seek another  
teaching church or ministry environment? \_\_\_\_ yes, we are able \_\_\_\_ no, another environment is better

Is this church willing to underwrite some or all of the costs for the training and supervision of this candidate? \_\_\_\_ yes  
\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ maybe

List the name(s) and phone number(s) of a person(s) who is willing to serve on the candidate's supervisory committee (*for  
the duration of the candidate's training*) Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

List the name and phone number of a person who might serve as a Mentor for the candidate (*for the duration  
of the candidate's training*)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Vice President of Consistory \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_

*Send this form to the appropriate classis committee for consideration.*

**CLASSIS ENDORSEMENT COMMISSIONED PASTOR PROCESS**

After considering the application of the candidate, \_\_\_\_\_, and the recommendation of the consistory of the \_\_\_\_\_ (church), the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby endorses \_\_\_\_\_ as a candidate for training as a Commissioned Pastor. We have interviewed the candidate and reviewed the references provided and hereby attest to the call, character and Christian commitment of the candidate. We will support and encourage the candidate as he/she seeks to become a Commissioned Pastor.

Signature of the Classis Stated Clerk

Date of Endorsement by the Classis

What ministry setting for learning does the classis recommend?

Is your classis willing to underwrite some or all of the costs for the training and supervision of this candidate?

List the name and phone number of a member of classis who is willing to serve on the candidate's supervisory committee  
*(for the duration of the candidate's training)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

List the name and phone number of a member of classis who is willing to serve as a Mentor for the candidate *(for the duration of the candidate's training)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D:



### Distance Learning Courses for Commissioned Pastor Training

Western Theological Seminary, in partnership with the Commissioned Pastor Advisory Team of the Reformed Church in America, is pleased to

announce a new series of distance-learning courses, designed to support the equipping of commissioned pastors for their work in the Reformed Church in America. These are high-quality courses which carry Master's level academic credit, and are designed specifically for the needs of those who are preparing to become commissioned pastors in the RCA. They are offered in a distance-learning format, and can be completed entirely in one's own setting, with no residency requirement on the campus of the seminary. Computer access to the Internet with a broadband connection is required for participation.

Each course will include 13 weeks on instruction. In consultation with leaders of commissioned pastor training in the RCA regional synods and classes, commissioned pastor candidates may elect to take any or all of the courses that may seem appropriate to their needs. Each course will be offered in a dual format. Students can take the course for two academic credits, which means that the workload for the course will be such that an average student will need to put in about 6 hours per week in the course. Or, the courses can be taken for three academic credits, which means that more topics will be covered at a deeper level, and the average workload will be about nine hours per week.

Each course is taught by an experienced instructor with an established and fruitful teaching ministry. The courses also include experienced pastors who serve as mentors and small group facilitators for group interaction. Each course will be structured in weekly modules, and each module will include audio or video lectures, reading assignments, online assignments, brief papers, and message board interaction with other students. Students are free to work on the course on their own schedule during each week, but each week's assignments must be completed at some point during that week, so that the class as a whole stays on track, and so that student interaction can be enriched.

Courses completed in this program are recorded on a Western Seminary academic transcript, and may be transferred into an M.Div. or M.A. degree program at a later date. As such, the classes presuppose that most students have already received an undergraduate college/university degree, or are able to document their ability to do work which presupposes a basic liberal arts background at the undergraduate level. Whether the courses transfer as electives or as core courses will depend on the transfer policies and curriculum of the seminary receiving the transfer credit. Students who complete all six courses in this program will receive a certificate from Western Theological Seminary. This certificate is a recognition of completed work, but it does not indicate, in itself, that a candidate is fully prepared to become a commissioned pastor. That judgment rests with the classis alone, and will often include additional requirements in supervised ministry and in the ten areas of training specified in the RCA *Book of Church Order*, section 1.II.14.3.

Those applying to be students in this program must fill out an application form, and obtain a letter of endorsement from their classis, certifying that the applicant is an approved candidate in the process of preparation to become a commissioned pastor. The application form is found at the end of this document. In order to receive credit for these courses, students without an undergraduate degree must also submit with their application an academic paper in some subject area of the liberal arts, as evidence of their ability to work at the Master's level. However, a limited number of students who cannot document the equivalence of a college degree, but who still would like to take these courses, may be admitted on a non-credit basis. These students will be expected to complete all assignments, and will receive a signed Statement from the professor certifying their completion of all assignments. Students admitted in this way will not receive academic credit for the courses.

Tuition for the courses is \$376.00 per credit hour, meaning that a two-credit version of each course costs \$752, and a three-credit version costs \$1128. Those taking classes without academic credit pay tuition at the two-credit rate. Payment is due at the beginning of each course.

If you have further questions, you may contact Dr. Jim Brownson at Western Seminary. His email address is [jim.brownson@westernsem.edu](mailto:jim.brownson@westernsem.edu).