The Reformed Church in America has a process available toward ordination that allows for those gifted and called, but who cannot earn a Master of Divinity Degree (M.Div.) from an accredited theological seminary. The process is called the Approved Alternate Route (AAR). It takes into account experience, demonstrated ability, and clear call to ordained ministry. The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) is the agent assigned to oversee the AAR process.

The MFCA is committed to help candidates meet the RCA requirements for ordination to the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament. We are available as well to serve RCA students who are not in the ordination track. We recognize the significance of those who are being equipped to serve Christ in forms of ministry not requiring ordination.

This handbook is designed for candidates who are under classis care and are pursuing ordination in the Approved Alternate Route (AAR). It will familiarize you with the AAR process and subsequent requirements. You are responsible for knowing the contents of the handbook and following its directions. Failure to do so will jeopardize your certification. The MFCA staff is available for clarification and assistance as needed.

Your interest in preparing for the ministry of Jesus Christ is of great significance to us. You are important to the future ministry of the church. It is our purpose to support and guide you in fulfilling God's purpose for your life.

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11
The Approved Alternate Route (AAR)

THE PROCESS

The 1997 Report of the Task Force on Standards for the Preparation of the Professional Ministry in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) provided for an alternative to seminary training for some candidates for the ministry of Word and sacrament in the RCA. This alternative—known as the Approved Alternate Route (AAR)—replaced the established dispensation process. It is defined by the Book of Church Order (BCO) Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Sec. 4.

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) has appointed an AAR Certification Committee that will determine whether or not an applicant is eligible to be a candidate in the AAR process and evaluate the program proposal presented by the classis for approval. The AAR Certification Committee will also assess the candidate’s fitness for ministry and recommend granting or denying the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. The AAR Certification Committee will include two General Synod Professors of Theology, two RCA ministers of Word and sacrament, and two RCA elders.

Once an applicant is received as a candidate in the AAR process and the classis’ program proposal is approved, the MFCA will supervise the candidate’s progress with the assistance of the classis. Ordinarily, when the candidate has satisfied the requirements of their program proposal, the candidate will attempt the final examination for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry as administered by the MFCA. The MFCA utilizes a case study examination.
Determining Eligibility (The Application)

A member of the church who has demonstrated gifts for the office of minister of the Word and sacrament, but who is unable to earn an M.Div. or its equivalent and take the regular course of seminary instruction because of age, lack of necessary academic preparation, language differences, or other sufficient reason, may seek an Approved Alternate Route in order to be awarded the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. (Cf. Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 3).

Normally, applicants to the AAR process will have successfully completed an undergraduate degree. Transcripts of all post–high school academic work must be submitted as part of the application.

The Approved Alternate Route (AAR) process itself is initiated by the classis. The candidate’s home church and its consistory have the responsibility of bringing the candidate to the classis. The candidate must be a member, in good standing of a local RCA congregation. In some circumstances, the classis may identify a person from outside the denomination who qualifies for the AAR process and an RCA ministry opportunity. Those individuals will be asked to seek an RCA congregation who will sponsor them for this process.

The originating classis contacts the MFCA in written form through the clerk of classis and is encouraged to work out a schedule with the MFCA for the development of an application and upon admittance, a program proposal. The classis shall provide all applicable information on the candidate as part of the application -- transcripts of education completed, work resume, a positive criminal background check at the candidate’s expense, and a statement giving the rationale for choosing the AAR. The classis shall verify that the following criteria are met as part of the application to the MFCA:

1. The candidate will have at least five years’ experience in leadership in the church.
2. A consistory or classis ministry has demonstrated compelling need for the candidate’s ministry.
3. The candidate is able to provide evidence of the call, gifts, and experience appropriate for a Minister of Word and sacrament.
4. The candidate, for compelling practical reasons, cannot complete a master of divinity degree at an accredited seminary.

(BCO: Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 3b)

The classis shall apply to the MFCA for admission into the AAR. The AAR Certification Committee will receive the application (Form 5A) and will report its decision to the MFCA Board of Trustees before responding back to the classis. The AAR Certification Committee may require a personal meeting with the candidate and classis representatives. If the committee rejects the application, it shall clearly state its reasons. The classis may then revise the application and reapply. Appeals usually go to the MFCA Board of Trustees after the AAR Certification Committee has made a second recommendation. Once the candidate has been admitted to the process the candidate and classis are required to pay a fee of $1,500.00 to the MFCA. Payment of the fee is necessary for the program proposal to be received. Once the program proposal has been received the candidate will also be responsible for the full cost of the Personality – Vocational Assessment (2010 cost is $650.00)

There is an underlying assumption that a candidate will have completed a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent and that courses taken at the seminary level will be taken at an ATS accredited school.
Developing a Program Proposal

The sponsoring classis will develop, in cooperation with the MFCA, a proposal for a program for each applicant to the Approved Alternate Route (AAR) process. In developing a proposed program for an applicant to the AAR process, a classis should address the following concerns:

1. the applicant’s spiritual, moral, social and relational, psychological and emotional, and intellectual qualities
2. the applicant’s promise and potential for ministerial leadership
3. the applicant’s doctrinal views and theological understandings
4. the applicant’s familiarity with the RCA and commitment to its mission
5. the applicant’s capacity for growth and continuous learning

Each proposal must include the following elements:

1. a written description of the knowledge, competencies, and values the applicant brings to the process and of what the candidate will need to do in order meet the requirements for receiving a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry,
2. a five - to seven - page spiritual autobiography by the applicant,
3. provision for the applicant to be interviewed by the AAR Certification Committee,
4. a credo written by the applicant,
5. provision for the applicant to complete core courses in RCA theology, history, liturgy, polity, and mission offered by the MFCA or one of the RCA seminaries or to demonstrate a solid knowledge and understanding of these subjects (*Please note that a GPA of 3.0 ("B") or better is required to pass each course; lower grades will require review if they are to be considered for meeting RCA requirements.*),
6. provision for the applicant to complete a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or to submit the evaluation report of an already completed CPE unit. In certain circumstances the *Seminar for Pastoral Formation*, as offered by the MFCA as an alternative to a unit of CPE, may be substituted,
7. provision to take seminary courses in areas where deficiencies have been identified; normally, all academic work proposed will be taken at an ATS accredited seminary.
Accepting a Candidate and Approving or Denying a Proposed Program

Each proposed program will be reviewed by the AAR Certification Committee and will be approved, modified, or denied. The AAR Certification Committee will report its action to the MFCA Board of Trustees.

If the proposal is denied, the classis may appeal the AAR Certification Committee’s denial of the proposal to the MFCA Board of Trustees who will review the Committee’s evaluation and either uphold or overturn the decision.

Approval of a proposed program of preparation and acceptance of an applicant as a candidate in the AAR process commits both the classis and the candidate to the agreed upon requirements.

Modifications to the program proposal must be agreed to by both the classis, or its committee and the AAR Certification Committee.
Assessing a Candidate’s Fitness for Ministry

Upon completion of the program, the AAR Certification Committee will assess the candidate’s fitness for ordination as a minister of Word and sacrament in the RCA. Their assessment will be guided by:

- satisfactory evaluations of the candidate’s last two years of ministry experience by those who have mentored, supervised, and experienced the candidate’s ministry
- transcripts of all courses that were part of the candidate’s program
- an updated resume indicating ministry experiences and educational activities in which the candidate has been engaged since entering the AAR process
- a positive personality – vocational assessment including any requested follow up.
- completion of at least one basic unit of preaching including theory and practice; or, video tapes of three to five worship services and sermons, accompanied by sermon manuscripts, study notes, and evaluations by worshipers that evidence competence in worship leading, sermon preparation and delivery
- completion of one basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at an accredited ACPE site. See www.acpe.edu for approved sites. Alternatives can be substituted if the candidate’s circumstances simply do not allow the candidate to enroll in an official program. The MFCA has developed the “Seminar on Pastoral Formation” as one such alternative.
- successful completion of the written and oral portions of the case study examinations (Eight Criteria; Appendix Two).

An interview with the AAR Certification Committee will draw on information from the candidate’s spiritual autobiography, any psychological or vocational testing results, and seek to assess the candidate’s fitness based on responses to cases presented to the candidate, to reading in The Church Speaks (see attached appendix, "A Study Guide for The Church Speaks" prepared by Paul R. Fries, for study questions), and to general questions designed to evaluate the candidate’s overall capacity for ministry leadership and level of competency in the various areas of the practice of ministry.

The AAR Certification Committee, when it has completed its examination of the candidate and made a determination regarding the candidate's fitness for ministry, will present a recommendation to the MFCA Board. The MFCA Board will then vote to either grant or deny the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.

Revised 2/2009
CHECKLIST FOR THE AAR PROCESS

The following is a resource for the AAR candidate and classis. Although each candidate’s process will have its own nuances, this checklist is designed to assist the classis and the candidate through the normal steps and requirements of the process.

_____ Consistory applies to Classis
_____ Classis interviews candidate and determines eligibility
_____ Classis submits application to the MFCA
_____ AAR Certification Committee reviews application and determines eligibility
_____ MFCA communicates decision to admit or deny
_____ If denied, Classis may appeal; if admitted Classis moves toward program proposal

_____ Classis, in consultation with the MFCA staff develop a written program proposal
_____ Classis submits the program proposal to the AAR Certification Committee
_____ MFCA approves program proposal

_____ Personality – Vocational Assessment      _____ Updated Affirmation of Call
_____ RCA Polity ___ RCA Standards ___ RCA History      ___ RCA Worship
_____ Recommended courses: ________________________________

_____ Credo

_____ Clinical Pastoral Education      _____ Supervised Ministry Evaluations

_____ Examination (Final) for the Certificate of Fitness   ____ Written      _____ Oral

_____ MFCA Board awards the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry

_____ Classis examinations for licensure and ordination

AAR Checklist for process (2/2009)
Appendix Two

Reformed Church in America

Standards for the Preparation for Ministry and AAR Program Proposal
Development Guidelines

The paragraphs below, in italics, are intended to be a resource for classes, providing ideas and examples for program proposals according to the eight criteria. The Approved Alternate Route (AAR) is meant to be custom designed and uniquely flexible for the candidate and his or her situation. The guidelines are suggestions to assist the classis in creating a program proposal.

Before beginning the formulation of the program proposal, it might be helpful to list the candidate’s corresponding experience, personal study and academic courses under each of the eight criteria. With that as a starting point, the classis is asked to develop a proposal for each criterion, keeping in mind that the original items listed may be recognized as meeting a part, or the whole of the standard.

The proposal will be presented to the AAR Certification Committee for its review and approval. Classes should not consider the guidelines and examples below as non-negotiable requirements but rather as an expression of preferences coming from previous program proposals. It should be noted that the standards for the preparation for Ministry of Word and sacrament and the AAR imply that a candidate is capable of graduate study at an ATS (Association of Theological Schools) seminary even though the Master of Divinity degree is not required.

Unless a case can be made for not including a personality – vocational assessment, a credo and the case study examinations, these components should be written into a program proposal.

Suggestions and examples from past programs are provided for each criterion:

#1 (Personal Faith and Evangelism)

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

The candidate shall be articulate about the power of congregational life to form persons in faith; shall evidence skill in designing and participating with others in a program of education; whether engaged with groups or individuals, shall take care to hand over the Christian faith and its practices in ways that are responsive to human developmental, personal and contextual realities; shall be able to give an account of the faith that is in him/her and daily seek to live out that faithfully; shall demonstrate awareness of God’s redemptive labor in self and others, and a willingness to welcome the perception of others.

Program proposals may include specific personal and ministry experiences, supervised ministry, and personal testimonies presented through journals and papers. Coursework in Christian education and developmental psychology may be included in program proposals. Processes including spiritual direction, personal therapy and Clinical Pastoral
*Education (CPE)* are examples of what can be stipulated as part of the proposal for this criterion.

#2 (Call)

**Demonstrate a life worthy of the gospel, a sense of call to the office of minister of Word and sacrament, an understanding of that office in the Reformed tradition, and a commitment to its responsibilities.**

Ever dependent upon God’s grace, the candidate should be a model of faithful Christian practices. The candidate should be able to articulate a biblical and Reformed understanding of a call to ministry. More specifically, the candidate should be able to describe his/her own call to the office of minister of Word and sacrament—aware of the internal and external nature of this call. Finally, the candidate should be able to describe the responsibilities of a minister of Word and sacrament and demonstrate a personal commitment to such responsibilities.

The program proposal in this area will need to insure that a solid understanding of Reformed theology and the RCA exists. The RCA courses (RCA History & Missions, RCA Polity, RCA Standards and RCA Worship) are almost always included in what is proposed to fulfill this criterion. Opportunities to do some guided theological reflection and journaling might also be beneficial.

#3 (Scripture)

**Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the Scripture (with sufficient Greek and Hebrew to understand nuances of the biblical text), commitment to its authority as Word of God, and insight in its interpretation.**

The candidate shall articulate an overarching understanding of Scripture, and at least a paragraph on the content and perspective of any biblical book. Basic principles of biblical interpretation shall be demonstrated, including insights gained from consideration of grammar, genre, historical context, literary context, canonical context, and theological analysis. Some meaningful insight into the text that arises specifically from a consideration of the original languages shall be demonstrated. The ability to interpret Scripture appropriately for preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, and to demonstrate appropriate personal convictions on how the Bible functions as the Word of God, is expected.

Program proposals may include academic coursework at the graduate level. *Introduction to the Old and New Testaments, books of the Bible and exegetical practices* are almost always considered a minimum. *Courses in Greek and Hebrew as well as the tools for interpreting scripture* are suggested. Knowing how to use software and lexicons is important and creative suggestions such as tutoring from a Jewish rabbi in OT Hebrew have been utilized in the past. *Distance and online courses are options for those who do not have access to educational institutions (Fuller Online, RTS, GCTS Semlink and now WTS).*
#4 (History and Theology)

**Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the history and teachings of the Christian Church, and insight in their interpretation.**

The candidate should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major persons, movements and events in the history of the Christian church from the first century to the present, worldwide; and with specific reference to these, to articulate major issues that have arisen over time in the following areas: the development and variation of Christian doctrine; the geographical expansion and contraction of Christianity and its encounter with other faiths; and the variation of the relationship between church and society. In each of these areas, the candidate should also be able to reflect theologically on issues currently facing the church with attention to their historical context.

*This criterion presumes that candidates possess a thorough knowledge of the history of Christian thought. Proposals normally include seminary courses that cover the full range of Church history (Early Church to present) and Systematic Theology. Occasionally, a candidate has acquired this knowledge through personal interest and reading and can be assessed by a qualified person or committee.*

#5 (Reformed Tradition)

**Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of and commitment to Reformed doctrine, government and worship.**

The candidate will be able to demonstrate both an understanding of the historic situations in which the constitution of the RCA (i.e. the confessions, liturgies and church order) developed and adapted for use in America and a thorough knowledge of the content of the relevant texts. He or she will be able to articulate the inter relationship of the three parts of the constitution, and their use and authority in the congregations, assemblies and judicatories of the denomination. The candidate will be expected to offer reflections on the pastoral and missional significance of Reformed doctrine, government and worship, and to be conversant with their implications for ecumenical fellowship, especially in relationship to The Formula of Agreement.

*This criterion may also be informed by way of the RCA courses and being immersed in the life of an RCA congregation.*

#6 (Leadership)

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

The candidate shall be able to: accurately interpret the ministry context and distinctive features of congregational culture relevant to empowering the people of God for meaningful and effective participation in God’s mission in their ministry setting; empower and equip leaders for worship, teaching and study, community and care, social witness, evangelism, prayer and spiritual disciplines, mission, and leadership. The candidate shall be able to identify and effectively use her or his leadership style, demonstrate competence in such practical matters as leading effective meetings, maintaining appropriate boundaries, exercising responsible stewardship of time, and appropriating relevant insights from the leadership literature.
Program proposals to meet this standard may almost always include supervised ministry in a local RCA congregation and coursework in leadership. Conferences held by organizations and churches such as Alban, Willowcreek and Saddleback are options for equipping the candidate in leadership.

#7 (Pastoral Care)

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

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate empathic understanding for persons facing stressful life experiences, shall have a capacity to celebrate with persons experiencing joyous events, and shall possess skills for exercising discipline in guiding persons toward personal and spiritual wholeness. The candidate shall have an understanding of how persons function in family and congregational systems and be sensitive to cultural and contextual factors in the providing of pastoral care. The candidate shall be able to cultivate spiritual resources in persons for their sustaining and nurture in faith, but also cultivate these resources in the candidate's own life as regards faith, self care, accountability and clarity about personal boundaries. The candidate shall be able to discern when to draw upon the resources of other professions in providing care and to train lay leadership in extending the pastoral care ministry of the church beyond that of the pastor.

Program proposals may include a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or its approved alternative such as the Seminar on Pastoral Formation. Courses in Pastoral Care & Counseling as well as systems theory may be specified. Personal counseling and therapy with a professional counselor are also highly regarded options.

#8 (Worship and Preaching)

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

The candidate should be able to articulate and put into practice a Reformed vision of the enduring structure of the Word of God in proclamation, sacrament, and discipline which underscores the real presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the proclamation of the Word, in the bread broken and the cup poured out, in the waters of baptism, and in the corporate life of the Christian community. The candidate should also demonstrate a clear sense of the primacy and authority of the Scriptures in preaching, the critical role of the people of God as salt and light in the world, and an awareness of the role of time and culture in both preaching and worship.

Program proposals almost always include courses, or equivalent experiences, in communication, homiletics and sermon delivery. The RCA Worship course may also be considered foundational.
Appendix Three

Samples of the Case Study Exams are available by calling the MFCA office at (800) 435-5136 or by going to the rca.org website at:

PETITION FOR THE CERTIFICATE OF FITNESS FOR MINISTRY
BY MEANS OF THE APPROVED ALTERNATE ROUTE (AAR)

"A candidate for the ministry who has not received the degree of Master of Divinity or a degree that is its equivalent from a seminary that is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or by a theological accrediting agency of comparable standards as determined by the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency may qualify for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry providing the following conditions are met:

a. A consistory shall assess the candidate's call, gifts, and experience in accordance with the standards requisite for the ministry of Word and sacrament. The consistory shall apply to the classis on the candidate's behalf.

b. The classis shall determine: (1) the candidate has a least five years' experience in leadership in the church; (2) the consistory has demonstrated compelling need for the candidate's ministry; (3) the candidate gives evidence of the call, gifts, and experience for the ministry of Word and sacrament, and (4) it is not practical to request that the candidate complete a Master of Divinity degree at an accredited seminary.

c. The classis shall apply to the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency for permission to pursue a special course of ministerial formation. If that agency rejects the application, it shall clearly state its reasons. The classis may reapply.

d. The classis shall form a committee to care for and to guide the candidate through his or her program.

e. The classis shall propose to the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency an appropriate program of ministerial formation.

f. When the candidate has completed the course of study, the candidate shall be examined for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry by the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency. The method of assessment shall be culturally and linguistically appropriate.

g. When the candidate passes the examination, the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency may award the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry." (BCO,1,II,9,3)

The Classis of ________________ requests admission to the alternate route process for the following candidate who was received under care of classis on______________

Name _____________________________ Date of Birth _______________________

Address_________________________________________________________________

City ___________ State/Province ______ Zip_______ E-Mail ______________________

Telephone __________________________

Church Membership _______________________________________________________

(Church) (City) (State/Province)

Pastor's Name ________________________________

College_________________________ Graduation year ____ Degree _______________

Signature of Applicant ___________________________ Date ______________

(over)
The classis applies for the Approved Alternate Route (AAR) on behalf of the candidate:

*Classis, please:*

1. Provide the reasons that qualify the candidate for the Approved Alternate Route (AAR); please utilize the four criteria (b above) as the guideline for the rationale:

   *(Please attach explanation on separate document)*

2. Once the MFCA Board of Trustees has declared a candidate eligible for the AAR process, as a classis, please provide any transcripts, résumés and autobiographical statements in order to begin an assessment process toward the program proposal.

   *(Please list those items which are being submitted)*

__________________________  __________________
Signature of Stated Clerk Date

Please forward this application to the MFCA (Reformed Church in America), 8303 Alondra Blvd. Suite C Paramount, CA 90723. Application must be received two months prior to a meeting of the MFCA Board of Trustees, at which time this application is to be considered.

________________________________________

*Office Use Only*

Date petition received:______________________Director Signature:________________________

Date petition considered by MFCA Board of Trustees:________________________

Action Taken:________________________________________

Rev. 2/2009
Appendix Five

MINISTERIAL FORMATION CERTIFICATION AGENCY
Reformed Church in America

A Study Guide for
The Church Speaks
Prepared by Paul R. Fries

The following questions are offered to help you in your study of The Church Speaks. You may wish to consult the Reformed Church in America's standards, order and liturgies as you answer these questions.

1. What prompted the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) to form a Commission on Theology (COT)? What is its purpose today? What authority should be given its studies?
2. How according to the Commission's papers is the infallibility of scripture to be understood?
3. What efforts have been made in the RCA to produce a contemporary confession? Why do you think that the RCA, unlike many other Reformed bodies, has been unwilling to adopt a contemporary confession?
4. What is the difference between a creed and a confession? Which do the RCA recognize as standards? What is the authority of the standards in the denomination?
5. How does the Reformed tradition understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit? How does this understanding differ from that of the Pentecostal churches?
6. How would you characterize COT's presentation of the filling of the Spirit as it relates to the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
7. How does the Commission’s study on conscience and authority understand the place of conscience in the life of the church? How do you regard the "conscience clause" in the RCA Book of Church Order in the light of this study?
8. What are the arguments given in COT studies defending the baptism of infants? Why is the dedication of infants not permissible in the RCA?
9. What theological points does COT identify in support of recommendation that baptized children under certain conditions be allowed to come to the Lord's Table?
10. What are the conditions that govern the admission of baptized children to the table?
11. For what reasons is rebaptism not allowed in the RCA?
12. What are the differences between the 1968 and 1980 studies on ministry? Why is it recommended that the two studies be used together?
13. How does the Commission attempt to strike a balance between witness in word and witness in deed?
14. What, according to the Commission study, is the meaning of the Sabbath? How should it be observed? What would you add to or subtract from this study?
15. How should the Christian relate to the Jew? What cautions are raised by the study? What is the Christian challenge regarding the Israel?
16. How would you characterize COT's position on divorce and remarriage? Can you describe the biblical hermeneutic (method of interpretation) used by the commissioners in the development of the paper?
17. How does the COT paper view homosexuality? Can you describe the biblical hermeneutic (method of interpretation) used by the commissioners in the development of the paper? How does it compare with the hermeneutic of the paper on divorce and remarriage?
18. Do you find the pastoral guidelines for the care of homosexuals helpful? Would you change them in any way? How?
19. Which of the papers included in this volume did you find most helpful? Which the least helpful?
20. How could these and subsequent studies be used in the congregation?
APPROACHING THE CREDO

The credo is a personal summary of Christian doctrine and is written by the candidate as a formulation of faith which draws from the Reformed tradition which nourishes and structures it. It is meant to be a personal statement which utilizes the reformed confessions but does not result in an apology for the teachings of the RCA.

Candidates can use the work of theologians, past and present, who have helped form their personal faith positions. The candidate's personal experience also plays a vital role in the writing of a credo. Religious events, social location, gender and racial identity, personal history, psychological make-up--such are ingredients which filter our experience of God and shape our understanding of faith and its implications.

But a word of caution. If theological students once tended to dismiss experience, attempting to base their theology exclusively on prepositional assertions (after the fashion of their professors!), students today tend to substitute raw experience for theological formulation. Experience in itself is not theology. For example, long before liberation theology came into existence, there was a point where the victims of oppression began to understand their experience theologically.

The thing to be said about credo writing is that as evangelical Christians we hold the word of God to be the norm for all theology. Expressed through scriptures, interpreted over the centuries by believing men and women, the leaven for the faith and practice of our denominations as well as our personal lives in Christ, it is the alpha and omega of every theological construct. How the candidate employs scripture will be a critical issue in every credo.

Dr. Paul Fries, the main teacher and evaluator of the credo makes the following points about the credo process:
CREDO:  

A theological statement  
An understanding of God  
in the world.  

INCLUDE:  
1) Scripture  
2) Confessions - tradition  
   liturgy  
3) Experience  
4) Context  

Candidates need to allow at least  
three (3) months for the  
evaluation of the credo.  

The credo is a statement of your  
personal beliefs regarding the  
main areas of Christian theology.  
It should focus on what you  
believe rather than on what you  
understand intellectually. The  
emphasis is on the articulation of  
your own faith rather than on the  
quotation of theological sources or  
authors. The credo represents the  
measure of closure on basic  
beliefs that you have achieved as  
a result of your biblical and  
thecomological studies. Qualified  
professors serve as readers. The  
credo is not looked upon as a test  
of orthodoxy. However, you  
should indicate with candor any  
disagreement that you may have  
with tenets of the RCA  
confessional statements. Now,  
rather than later, is the time to  
discover and discuss these  
disagreements.  

The length of the credo is to be  
thirty to fifty (for some, eighty  
pages is not unusual) typed,  
double-spaced pages. The form  
(grammar and sentence structure)  
and neatness of paper should be  
given attention as well as the  
content. It should include, with  
Scriptural basis, your belief  
regarding the following questions:  
(This is a guideline for those who  
need such structure; a document  
that includes the points below, but  
has its own format and structure is  
also acceptable.)  

1. Theological Method  

In this chapter you will discuss  
a. the sources you will use in  
the writing of your credo; b.  
how the sources relate to one  
another; c. how you will  
organize the remaining six  
chapters and why. What is
revelation and how does it differ from ordinary ways of knowing? Where is relation to be found—by what means do we receive it? Is there a difference between special and general revelation? In what way does all revelation culminate in Jesus Christ? What is the relationship of Christ to the Bible? How do you understand the inspiration of scripture? The work of the Spirit in inspiration and illumination?

2. The Doctrine of God

In this chapter you will discuss the doctrine as understood in Christian theology. You will be expected to articulate a doctrine of the trinity. How do we understand the trinity? What do we mean by the persons of the trinity? How do the persons differ from one another? How do the persons relate in the life of God apart from any action of God? How do they relate in the activities of God in creation and redemption (a brief indication called for here since these subjects will be treated more fully in subsequent chapters)? What are the attributes of God? How can they be organized?

3. The Doctrines of Creation, Fall and Sin

In this chapter you will discuss the doctrines of the creation of the world as well as the creation of human beings and then the doctrines of the fall and resulting sin. How do you understand the teaching that creation involves all three persons of the trinity? What is the meaning of creation out of nothing, and what are the implications of this teaching for our understanding of God, the world and God’s relationship to the world? Does creation have a purpose? How do you understand the doctrine of the goodness of creation? Where does evil come from? What is the meaning of humanity bearing the image of God? What prompted the fall? What were the effects of the fall regarding the image of God? What does Reformed theology understand by the terms “original sin” and “total depravity?” Describe your understanding of sin and its effects on humanity and the world.

4. The Doctrine of Christ

In this section you will discuss Christ being and mission—that is the who and what of Christ called in traditional theology the person and work of Christ. How is the incarnation to be understood? What do we confess when we speak of the two natures of Christ? What
are these natures and how are they related to one another in Jesus Christ? What are the three offices of Christ as understood in Calvinistic theology and what is the mission of each? How does the exercise of these offices differ in the ministry of the historic Jesus in contrast to that of the ascended Lord? Under which of the offices is the atonement to be discussed? What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the ministry and mission of Christ?

5. The Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

In this section you will discuss the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the salvation accomplished by Christ into the life of the believer. How does Reformed theology understand regeneration and sanctification? What occurs in the life of the believer when salvation is being mediated by the Spirit? How do you understand justification by faith and what is its importance? What is incorporation into Christ and how is it important? Where do the doctrines of election and soteriology intersect? What is the role of the law in sanctification? How does the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments relate to the reception of salvation?

6. Doctrine of the Church and Sacraments (Ecclesiology)

In this section you will discuss the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the church and sacraments. What is the relationship of the Christian church to the covenant community of the Old Testament? How do you understand the four characteristics (notes) of the church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic? Can you explain the significance of some of the names given to the church (e.g., the body of Christ, the communion of saints, the people of God)? In what ways is the church the work of the Holy Spirit, along with the Father and the Son? How does the church relate to the kingdom of God? What is a sacrament according to Reformed theology? What role does Holy Spirit play in the grace conveyed through the sacraments? How would you explain the Spirit’s action in baptism and articulate its meaning? Should infants be baptized? How would you explain the Spirit’s action in the Lord’s Supper and articulate its meaning? What does the Belgic Confession mean when it speaks of partaking of the natural body of
Christ (the “real presence” of Christ)?

7. The Doctrine of Last Things

In this section you will discuss the Biblical promise that in Christ God will bring to an end the world’s history of sin, evil, suffering and death and bring a new creation free of the blemishes which have disfigured fallen creation. What are the traditional millennial views? Which best express your understanding? How do you understand the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment and the new creation? In what condition is the believer after death but before the final resurrection? How do you understand the Biblical teaching that with the resurrection of Christ the “end” has entered into time? What is the relationship of the church to the kingdom of God?

**DEADLINES:**

⇒ If final certification review is in June--the credo must normally be received by the MFCA office by December 31.
⇒ If final certification review is in January--the credo must normally be received by the MFCA office by August 31.
Appendix Seven

Resources for Candidates with Specific Concerns

Women in Ministry:

Office for Women’s Ministries – Commission for Women
Claudette Reid
475 Riverside Drive, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10115
(800) 722-9977, ext. 3233
(212) 870-2499
creid@rca.org

There are a number of items that female candidates need to be aware of: 1) Annually there is a grant awarded through the Beth Marcus Fund for female candidates in seminary; and 2) Bi-annually there is a “Women in Ministry” event sponsored by the Office for Women – candidates are invited and scholarships are available to cover travel costs, etc.

Racial Ethnic Councils

Pacific and Asian Ministries
En Young Kim
475 Riverside Dr., 18th Floor
New York, NY 10115
(800) 722-9977
eykim@rca.org

African – American Ministries
Glenn Missick
475 Riverside Dr., 18th Floor
New York, NY 10115
(800) 722-9977 ext. 2538
gmissick@rca.org

Hispanic Ministries
Brigido Cabrera
475 Riverside Dr. 18th Floor
New York, NY 10115
(800) 722-9977 ext. 2127
bcabrera@rca.org

Native American Indian Ministries
Esa Attocknie
Route 1, Box 4160
Apache, OK 73006

Disabled and Personnel Concerns

Rev. Terry DeYoung
Grand Rapids, MI
tdeyoung@rca.org
# MINISTRY PROFILE BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

To be completed at application…

Date: ______________

Name: ____________________

Birthdate: ______________

Education: ____________________________________________________Elementary School Yr: ____
__________________________________________________Yr. ____
High School Yr. ____
______________________________________Yr. ____
College

Seminary Level ___________________________________________Highest, Yr. ____

Grades and honors: ___________________________________________

Extra-curricular Activities: ___________________________________________

_______________________

Church(es) while growing up ___________________________________________

RCA involvement: ___________________________________________

Home Church: ___________________________________________

Home Church Pastor: ___________________________________________

Home Classis: ___________________________________________

Pastor Sponsor: ___________________________________________

Parent’s Names: (Father) __________________________ Age __________

(Mother) ___________________________ (maiden) Age __________

Parent’s Date of Marriage: __________________________

Other information on parents, i.e., step-parents, divorce, deaths:

Parent’s Educational Levels achieved: __________________________

Parent’s Occupations: __________________________
Appendix Eight (cont’d)

Siblings: _______________________________________________________ Age ______
_______________________________________________________ Age:___________
_______________________________________________________ Age:___________

Please list the educational level of your siblings, marital status, and other relevant information about them next to their name or on the back side of this sheet.

If married, please provide the following information on your spouse

Spouse:_________________________ Birthdate: _____________ Wedding Date ____________

Parents:________________________________________________________ Ages:________

Educational levels and vocations: __________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

How and where did you meet? ____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Church background: ____________________________________________________________

Is your spouse supportive of your call into ministry? ________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

If you have children, please list them and their birthdates:

Child: ___________________________ Birthdate: _____________ Age:___________
Child: ___________________________ Birthdate: _____________ Age:___________
Child: ___________________________ Birthdate: _____________ Age:___________
Child: ___________________________ Birthdate: _____________ Age:___________

If you have more than four children, please list them on the back of this sheet. If you have been married more than once or are separated/divorced, please explain the circumstances on the back of this sheet.

If you or your spouse have been, or are currently employed, please give a brief listing of your employment history.

____________________________________________________________________________

To the best of your ability, please list what you consider to be your assets and liabilities, strengths and weaknesses, for ministry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Liabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Appendix Nine

Dear Candidate:

In pulling together the material for your personality – vocational assessment our office would be greatly assisted by receiving the following information... Please submit it electronically as e-mail; or even better, as an MS Word attachment to an e-mail.

This information is provided to me with the understanding and confidence that it is meant for me and possibly the Certification Committee. The narrative report resulting from this will not be released to other parties unless you give permission. You are entitled to have a copy of my report if you wish to read it.

Cornelis G. Kors

Please provide accurate and concise information as best you know it:

1) Was there any trauma at your birth and early infancy that you have been made aware of? Physical? Family relationships?
2) How would you describe your early school years?
3) How would you describe your high school and adolescent years?
4) Have there been any traumas or “life impacting events” in your pre-twenty years? Examples would include things such as divorcing parents / siblings, death of a family member or friend, accidents, alcohol or drug dependencies, and emotional or physical abuse.
5) Have you sought or been asked to participate in personal or family counseling? If yes, please explain?
6) How has your academic work gone? Have you had any special success or problems?
7) Please rate key relationships as to affection depth and significance (1 is None or non-existent; 10 is extremely deep and meaningful): Parents, siblings, close friends… (Please identify each separately by person?)
8) Have there been “significant” events or situations in your life in the past three years?
9) If married, or in a significant relationship, please share about the quality of the relationship? If you have children, please include those relationships in this answer?
10) Please share briefly how your seminary studies and ministry experiences are going?

Please create a “gift” list of assets and liabilities that you bring to ministry?