AUGUST 2010

EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)
MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate’s readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate’s ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Articulating the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word “Reformed,” wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and The Book of Confessions.

WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate’s views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate’s competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be evaluated more rigorously for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [Book of Order G-6.0108b]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A clean, unmarked, printed copy of The Book of Confessions (copyright 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.

Sections II and III of the examination are CLOSED BOOK.
GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)

You may write your answers in ink in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use a pencil to write your responses; papers written in pencil will be returned without being evaluated. If you handwrite your examination, do not skip lines in the examination book. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). Illegible papers shall be returned without being evaluated.

You are encouraged to use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You must confirm with the proctor in advance of the testing date what equipment (power strips, computers, printers, etc.) is available at the testing site.

If you use a computer:

- You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other resource on the computer or a network during the exam.
- A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the test site. Not turning in a printed copy will result in failure. You are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment and software are properly working and coordinated.
- Number the pages.
- Include your candidate number on each page of the exam, but not your name.
- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
- When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.

Syntax or grammar will not be evaluated. However, the evaluation of papers may be affected if they cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar.

Maintaining the candidate's anonymity is of fundamental importance to assure fair evaluation of examination papers. Failure to comply with any of the following instructions will result in the paper being found as unsatisfactory:

- Do not include your name
- Do not include the name of your congregation or presbytery
- Do not identify the seminary you attend or have attended
- Do not identify professors with whom you have studied
- Do not indicate whether you have taken this or other senior ordination exams before

All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a “Satisfactory” evaluation on at least two of the three sections to be considered “Satisfactory.”
SECTIIN I. CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE

ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)

Several people in the congregation you serve as pastor have recently asked about the passing of the peace during the worship service. In response, you and the session decide that peace will be the subject of the next adult education series.

In preparation, you turn first to John 14:27 (New Revised Standard Version), in which Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

As you consider the many different types of peace, you turn to The Book of Confessions.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Write an essay in which you identify and discuss different aspects of a Christian understanding of peace from a Reformed perspective. Use and discuss four (4) citations (e.g., 0.000) from The Book of Confessions. Citations must come from four (4) different documents in The Book of Confessions.

NOTE: You must use a clean, unmarked, printed copy of The Book of Confessions, copyright 2002 or later, for Section I. For the purposes of this examination, the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document. Turn in your copy of The Book of Confessions to the proctor by the end of the first hour of the examination. The proctor will then give you Sections II and III (pp. 4-6) of the examination.
THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY IS LEFT BLANK

UNPON COMPLETING SECTION I

TURN IN YOUR COPY OF THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS.

THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III
OF THE EXAMINATION.
AUGUST 2010
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION

SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

ONE HOUR  CLOSED BOOK  REQUIRED

As pastor, you are leading the worship committee of the session in a discussion of the concept of Sabbath. You share the following section from The Heidelberg Catechism:

Q. 103. What does God require in the fourth commandment?
A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and Christian education be maintained, and that I diligently attend church, especially on the Lord's day, to hear the Word of God, to participate in the holy Sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian service to those in need. Second, that I cease from my evil works all the days of my life, allow the Lord to work in me through his Spirit, and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath. (4.103)

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Write an essay reflecting on the theological meaning of Sabbath for life today, from a Reformed perspective. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY

ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED

(CHOSE ONE: A or B)

A.

Linda, a member of the congregation you serve as pastor, comes to see you the week after Easter. Her husband has been struggling with Alzheimer's disease. She says,

Pastor, it was so hard for me to listen to the Holy Week services this year. So much of our faith is about remembering: Jesus telling us to share the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him; the thief on Good Friday asking Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom; and then on Easter you asked us to remember our baptism.

My husband can't even remember who I am, let alone that he was baptized, or anything about Jesus or the church. I had to put him in a nursing home, where he doesn't know or recognize anyone. We have loved each other for fifty years. I think about him every day. What does his faith mean when he can't remember anything?

REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Write an essay in which you identify and discuss two (2) theological issues important in the Reformed tradition that underlie Linda's concern about her husband. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, describe how you would respond theologically to Linda's question.

- OR -
AUGUST 2010
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION

Page 7 of 7

SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)

ONE HOUR  CLOSED BOOK  REQUIRED

(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)

B.

You are pastor of a church and post a sign-up sheet for a trip to a local art exhibit. Members begin the following conversation with you.

Lois:  Pastor, I am surprised that you would suggest this trip. I thought that, given the Reformation, Presbyterians were against art.

Tim:  My former church had an artist-in-residence who helped us understand God through the use of sculpture and painting.

Bruce:  I think the arts are a bridge to help us understand our culture and bring the gospel to culture.

Abby:  But some particular works of art today are just anti-Christian.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

1.  Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of the place of the arts in Christian life. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

2.  Building on your essay in Required Response 1, respond theologically to three (3) of the comments above.
Section I. Confessional Heritage

Peace is a theme that echoes through the Holy Scriptures and through the Reformed Confessions. From the earliest times, God’s covenant people, Israel, longed for a land where they could live in peace and worship the Lord. The Israelites saw the lack of peace and even exile as a judgment of God, pointing to the fact that they had been unfaithful to the God who had brought them out of slavery. They looked forward to what Isaiah described as the “peaceable kingdom” in which God would rule all nations and be present on earth forever. This theme of peace continued in the New Testament, as the Jews longed for a time when Roman rule would be overthrown and the anointed one of God – the Messiah – would restore the relationship between God and God’s people. It is no surprise, therefore, that the words recorded in the Gospel according to John resonate so strongly with us even today: we long for peace – a peace that the world cannot provide.

The Confessions understand peace in several ways that reflect the various aspects of Christian peace: inner or personal peace, peace within church and community, peace among nations, and final or eschatological peace. It is important to remember, however, that these four aspects of peace all flow from the grace of God in the saving work of Jesus Christ and that peace therefore is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus there are not four kinds of peace, but one peace, that, as Jesus Christ states, is “my peace” (John 14:27).

Personal or inner peace is one of the “benefits in this life that accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification” (Shorter Catechism, 7.035). Through baptism, we are engrafted into Jesus Christ. Through his death, resurrection, and ascension, we receive forgiveness and a new life and become heirs with Christ of salvation. We have the assurance of Christ’s victory, and can be at peace in our lives knowing that we are reconciled to God. We can
accept ourselves are freed to live out this new identity in Christ (Brief Statement, 10.4), knowing that nothing in life or death, no powers, nothing in the future, can separate us from the love of God.

A second important aspect of a Christian understanding of peace is peace in church and community. Through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we live as members of the Body of Christ as we serve God and others. In our relationships with others, we “forgive one another and … enjoy the peace of God as [we] make peace among ourselves (Confession of 1967, 9.20). We then carry the joyful good news of this peace into the world and participate in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation. As the Brief Confession states, we “work with others for justice, freedom, and peace” for all humankind (10.4).

The third aspect of Christian peace in peace among nations. In the Reformed tradition, we hold that God is sovereign and that Christ is Lord of all. God in God’s providence sets governments in place to keep peace (Second Helvetic, 5.252). Though in the best cases governments and officials work for tranquility, governments often reflect the brokenness of humankind and act in ways that do not demonstrate the ideal of peace. Christians are called to identify and “oppose any lawful power” (Westminster, 6.111) that “acts contrary to the principles of Christianity”. Reformed Christians value both the prayerful discernment of the will of God by faithful Christians in community and also the conscience of the individual truly seeking God’s guidance; in such instances where civil disobedience is a possibility we must be particularly mindful of God’s leading.

Finally, the church awaits the culmination of all peace: the return of Jesus Christ in glory. Christ’s ascension and reign at the right hand of God NOW assures us that God will be faithful to God’s promise of the culmination of God’s Kingdom. We, along with all creation, yearn for that
time when all will be love and peace with Christ as our Light in that peaceable kingdom forever. In the words of the Brief Confession, “we watch for God’s new heaven and new earth, praying, ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’” (10.4).

Section II. Constructive Statement of Christian Doctrine

Our Reformed understanding of Sabbath grows out of our earliest understandings of God and God’s gracious acts. In Genesis, we read that God created all things in six days and pronounced God’s work “good” (Gen. 1). After God created humans, God directed them to care for all that had been created. Therefore both creation and vocation are gifts of God. However, God also created order in creation and rhythm to the days, seasons, and indeed the very lives of humans. The law received from God through Moses (Ex. 20, Deut. 5) asked humans to be mindful of this rhythm. Just as God rested on the seventh day, humans were called to reserve one day to glorify God and to rest from their labors, so that the Sabbath became not only a day for physical rest but also for renewal of spirit and for recognition of proper priorities: that God is the sovereign Lord of our lives.

Jesus honored and observed the rhythms and traditions of his Jewish heritage. However, we as Reformed Christians recognize that Jesus Christ deepened the understanding and even redefined the ancient traditions, giving them new meaning in light of God’s incarnational plan of salvation. Therefore, while recognizing and affirming the Sabbath, Jesus Christ asserted (as recorded in the Gospels) that the “Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” and that “the Sabbath was made for humans not humans for the Sabbath”. Thus Jesus reminded his followers (and us) that loving service that glorifies God is appropriate on any day of the week. After Jesus death, resurrection, and ascension, the early church combined the observance of the Sabbath with the
celebration of the Lord's resurrection. Thus every Christian Sabbath became a reaffirmation of God's grace through history: from creation through the life of Jesus and forward to the final culmination of God's kingdom.

As Calvin, Luther, and the other reformers called for a return to the importance of Word and Sacrament as part of the Christian life, they looked again to the need for individuals to keep proper priorities in their lives. These reformers reminded the church of the importance of vital, Christ-centered worship, making services available on the Sabbath and during the week in the language of the people, opening the Sacraments (both bread and cup) to all believers, and encouraging prayer (which Calvin called the "chief exercise of faith"). But they also reminded the church that work is a gift of God, inviting the faithful to see their "ordinary jobs" as vocations — callings by God to service in the world and therefore as a form of worship. The reformers also encouraged study of the Scriptures themselves and translated the Bible in the languages spoken by the common folk. Thus the Sabbath became the particular day on which the people could celebrate the grace and providence of God to them — in their own lives — through rest from their God-given vocation and in study and service to God but that all parts of their lives should glorify God.

In world today — busy as it seems to be — we can draw on Scripture and the work of the reformers in framing what Sabbath means for life today. The Sabbath was ordained by God as an opportunity to rest from our labors and is the opportunity for us to celebrate all of God's providence, especially the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Sabbath is an opportunity to reexamine our priorities and to recognize that we are to "love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Deut. 6:4). Our "chief end" is to "glorify God and enjoy God forever" (Westminster), therefore it is important to gather with and as the body of Christ to worship God,
be instructed by the reading and preaching of the Word, to be nourished by the Sacraments, and to be sealed and sent in service into the world. This community worship need not take place at the traditional Sunday morning hour but, since God has sanctified all time, can take place at times that are more attuned to our current life rhythms. It is also important to recognize that the Sabbath is an opportunity to turn from our daily vocation to the study of God’s Word and to service to others. Particularly on the Sabbath we are afforded the opportunity to meditate on Scripture so that, as the Psalmist says, we will be like flourishing trees beside the stream (Psalm 1).

Our primary example for all of life should be Jesus Christ, who daily observed times of prayer and teaching with the disciples, but also incorporated Sabbath rest into the routine of his life. This may seem to us very difficult in our busy lives. But, remembering that all parts of our lives are to glorify God, we are free to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading to creatively and faithfully use our time, dividing it between vocation, service to others, personal study, and corporate worship of God, until the eternal Sabbath in the Kingdom of God.

III. Application to Ministry (Part B)

God is an artist. Anyone who looks at the grandeur of the mountains, hears the delicate song of a wren, or touches the soft skin of a newborn understands that the arts were born in imitation of and in witness to the glory of God. Art also is able to express – through sight and sound – what the heart can feel, what the mind knows, but what common speech fails to say. Therefore is it not surprising that art has been used through the millennia as an expression of God’s love for us and our worship of God. Scripture, for example, often uses poetry to evoke powerful images of creation (Psalm 8) and to lift our souls to God (Psalm 150). The poetic and
prophetic words of the prophets are at time heart-rending in their poignancy. Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus and later the descriptions of Solomon’s Temple depict in detail the magnificence of the apparel and instruments of worship—all intended to glorify God. Miriam, Hannah, David, and Mary all sang songs, danced, or played instruments in affirmation of the greatness of God. Though history to this very day, art can enlighten and challenge us, lift us and surprise us with new ways to see the world.

In the Reformed tradition, two of the great ends of the church is the maintenance of worship and the preservation of truth. The Reformers recognized that art (for example, worship of icons) could easily become an object of worship, but yet at the same time understood that our proper response to God’s grace is offering our best in worship. This tension between simplicity in worship and glorifying God through artistic expression existed between individual reformers and is still felt in the church today.

The Directory for Worship recognizes that God is Spirit and that God cannot be contained in any created form. However, the Directory for Worship properly understands that created forms can be used to worship God since they have an expressive nature that can transcend the routine. Therefore we understand that art, when used in worship, can easily become idolatrous if attention is drawn to the art itself rather than to God. The Brief Confession of Faith calls us to “unmask” such idolatries. Therefore the session in overseeing worship must prayerfully discern the appropriate use of art forms, including paraments, vestments, banners, and candles, in worship. The minister must prayerfully consider how art forms might be used in the proclamation of the Word so that, above all, God is glorified.

Lois: “Lois, I really enjoy lots of different kinds of art: visual art, music, and so on. I was even involved in a gospel mime troupe at one time—it you can image that! I can see from your
READER'S EVALUATION SHEET IN THEOLOGY

I. EVALUATIONS OF THIS EXAMINATION. The examination consists of three sections, each designed to be completed in one hour. All three sections must be answered. Section III has two options, from which the candidate is instructed to select one. Each section must be evaluated as either "Satisfactory" (S) or "Unsatisfactory" (U). The reader must also assign an overall evaluation for this examination. If any section is omitted it will receive an evaluation of "O"; the examination must then receive an overall evaluation of "Unsatisfactory." The examination must receive an "S" on at least two out of the three sections to receive an overall evaluation of "Satisfactory."

Each examination will be evaluated independently by two readers. If both overall evaluations are "S," the conveners will record a final evaluation of "Satisfactory." If both readers evaluate the exam overall as "U," the exam receives a final evaluation of "Unsatisfactory." If the two readers disagree in their overall evaluations, the exam will be given to a third reader. The conveners will record the final evaluation based on the two concurring overall evaluations.

II. THIS EVALUATION SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. Each reader's comments should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper. These comments are read by the candidate and the candidate's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Use the back of this sheet OR attach a separate page for comments explaining the evaluations assigned to each section of this examination.

III. EVALUATIONS:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Optional Subject</th>
<th>S, U or O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Sabbath</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Alzheimer's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-OR- Art</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. OVERALL EVALUATION

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE A MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. (Please check if applicable.)

[Signature]

Reader's name printed       Reader's Signature
I. EVALUATIONS OF THIS EXAMINATION. The examination consists of three sections, each designed to be completed in one hour. All three sections must be answered. Section III has two options, from which the candidate is instructed to select one. Each section must be evaluated as either “Satisfactory” (S) or “Unsatisfactory” (U). The reader must also assign an overall evaluation for this examination. If any section is omitted it will receive an evaluation of “O”; the examination must then receive an overall evaluation of “Unsatisfactory.” The examination must receive an “S” on at least two out of the three sections to receive an overall evaluation of “Satisfactory.”

Each examination will be evaluated independently by two readers. If both overall evaluations are “S,” the conveners will record a final evaluation of “Satisfactory.” If both readers evaluate the exam overall as “U,” the exam receives a final evaluation of “Unsatisfactory.” If the two readers disagree in their overall evaluations, the exam will be given to a third reader. The conveners will record the final evaluation based on the two concurring overall evaluations.

II. THIS EVALUATION SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. Each reader’s comments should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper. These comments are read by the candidate and the candidate’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Use the back of this sheet OR attach a separate page for comments explaining the evaluations assigned to each section of this examination.

III. EVALUATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>(Required)</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section I</td>
<td>(Required)</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section II</td>
<td>(Required)</td>
<td>Sabbath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section III</td>
<td>(Required)</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. OVERALL EVALUATION

S

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE A MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. (Please check if applicable.)

GEORGE M. GILL
Reader’s name printed

Reader’s Signature
Section I
This essay was excellent! An additional piece might have been to define what the peaceable kingdom looks like or justice as a form of peace as St. John or likewise (cf.).

Section II
Happily this response recognizes that faith and need not be limited to Sunday, the Lord’s Day, consistent as it is. Good job.

Section III B
1) Good examples are needed to the possibility of art as an approach to God and recognition of God’s gifts creation.

2) The comment to Bruce doesn’t seem to clearly recognize the two-way nature of a village. It is not just Christianity or to the world but the world’s art (and in many cases God’s inspiration to us) coming back in other ways.
Section I: Peace

THE PAPER DISCUSSES THE THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PEACE WELL. THE CITATIONS ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AND USED WELL.

Section II: Sabbath

THIS PAPER SHOWS A WELL THOUGHT ANSWER TO THE SABBATH QUESTION. IT ILLUSTRATES THE TENSION IN OUR DAILY LIVES WITH WHAT THE SCRIPTURE SAYS. THE USE OF THE WORD "RHYTHM" IS AN INTERESTING CONCEPT. ALSO THE USE OF 'VOCATION' AS A GIFT FROM GOD IS NOTEWORTHY.

WHILE THE PAPER DISCUSSES DIVIDING TIME BETWEEN VOCATION, SERVICE TO OTHERS, PERSONAL STUDY AND CORPORATE WORSHIP OF GOD, POSSIBLY THIS MIGHT BE MADE STRONGER BY INCORPORATING THESE AREAS TOGETHER, WHERE POSSIBLE.

Section III: Art

A GOOD EXPLANATION OF THE PLACE OF ART IN THE REFORMED TRADITION IS GIVEN IN THE PAPER. THE RESPONSE OF THE PASTOR TO "LOIS" ASSUMES THAT SHE IS IN FAVOR OF ART IN THE CHURCH, WHILE SHE MAY NOT BE. WHAT WOULD BE THE RESPONSE TO SOMEONE WHO WAS MORE OPPOSED? WE DO NOT KNOW. OTHERWISE THE RESPONSES ARE WELL THOUGHT OUT.

Comments to CPM: