

Report of the General Synod Professorate

The office of General Synod professor involves representing “the living tradition of the church in the preparation and certification of candidates for ministry,” as well as exercising “the ministry of teaching within the RCA as a whole” (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8 [2021 edition, p. 74]). We fulfill this office both individually and collectively. Elected and installed by the General Synod, we remain amenable to the General Synod in matters of doctrine, striving at all times and in all ways to fulfill our calling faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully. This is the professorate’s eighth annual report to the General Synod.

There are presently five General Synod professors: Dr. Jaeseung Cha and Dr. Micah McCreary from New Brunswick Theological Seminary; Dr. Carol Bechtel and Dr. James Brownson from Western Theological Seminary; and Dr. Chad Pierce from the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency. Each professor was nominated by a theological agent of the General Synod and then elected by the General Synod to exercise a substantial and continuing role in preparing candidates for ministry in the RCA under the authority of their nominating agency.

The General Synod professorate is represented on the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board and continues to be in dialogue with that group about matters pertaining to the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. We are also represented on the committees of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency that recommend the granting of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to students at non-RCA seminaries and candidates pursuing the Approved Alternate Route (AAR) to ordination. We set and evaluate the written examinations for the AAR candidates.

As a body and as individuals we mark with sadness and appreciation the retirement of our friend and colleague, the Rev. Dr. Jim Brownson. Jim served Western Theological Seminary in many capacities including as academic dean and as the James and Jean Cook Professor of New Testament. Jim lived into his calling of shaping generations of pastors and teachers “to preach and teach the good news of salvation in Christ, to build up and equip the church for mission in the world, to free the enslaved, to relieve the oppressed, to comfort the afflicted, and to walk humbly with God” (from the Declaration for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Formulary 3). We pray that God will continue to bless him and “prosper the work of [his] hands” (Psalm 90:17).

In all of our work, we continue to explore new possibilities for our collective role. We are grateful for having been charged with this call and are deeply sensible of our responsibility to the church. We solicit your prayers and your advice, and we are committed to engaging conversation at all levels of the RCA’s life and work.

Respectfully submitted,
Chad Pierce, moderator,
together with the entire professorate, including Carol Bechtel, James Brownson, Jaeseung Cha,
and Micah McCreary