

FACULTY MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

A GUIDE FOR PROSPECTIVE FACULTY

CONTEXT

Calvin College has always been strongly committed to a Reformed Christian view of academic practice and community life. The college expects each member of its faculty to affirm and live out this Reformed perspective in every area of personal and professional endeavor.

Broadly speaking, Calvin holds faculty to two related expressions of Reformed commitment. First, members of the faculty are expected to demonstrate the Reformed character of their professional work, especially the way their Christian faith shapes their teaching and scholarship. This demonstration may occur informally through discussions and peer review, but it also occurs formally at the time of appointment through interviews, candidates' written statements of their religious faith, and required pastor's letters; and at the time of reappointment and tenure through student evaluations of teaching, department reviews of teaching and scholarship, and written statements on faith and learning. These formal and informal means of promoting the integration of faith and learning have helped to create a faculty and an institution which have earned high distinction in both the wider Christian community and the broader academy.

Second, Calvin College has always expected its faculty members to demonstrate their commitment to Reformed confessions and institutions through their formal affirmations and involvement in church and school. As members of the broader community of Reformed believers, faculty are required to affirm certain historic Reformed creeds and confessions, to participate in the Reformed church community, especially the Christian Reformed Church, and to promote Christian schooling at all levels. The three specific faculty membership requirements described below do not represent a litmus test of Christian faith, nor do they imply a judgment on the integrity of the faith of those who do not meet them. Rather, they reflect the fact that Calvin's place in higher education is distinguished partly by its stance as a confessional community. Maintaining the distinctive confessional identity of the college starts with the faculty's affirmation of the teachings of the Reformed church, an affirmation that is nurtured through the life of the church and finds expression in a Christian philosophy of education. The faculty membership requirements thus reflect a desire for integrity—integrity between communal traditions and contemporary commitments as well as integrity between institutional principles and personal belief and practice.

REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Calvin College faculty members are required to affirm the three historic Reformed forms of unity—the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—and pledge to teach, speak, and write in harmony with the confessions.**

While affirming the final authority of the Scriptures for faith and life, the Reformed tradition shares with other confessional traditions within Christianity the conviction that the doctrines contained in Scripture must be structured in a way that assures adherence to orthodox Christian belief. The college uses a *Covenant for Faculty Members* that is itself based on a historic document dating from the 17th century, rather than substituting a statement of faith specific to this institution and these times. This historic document and these confessions identify Calvin College with the Christian faith as it finds concrete expression in the Reformed tradition and in a particular denomination, the Christian Reformed Church, whose pastors and officers are required to sign the same *Covenant*.

To sign the *Covenant for Faculty Members* is to indicate sincere acceptance of the doctrines articulated in the confessional statements listed above. The signatory does not thereby declare that these doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner or that they are an exhaustive or definitive summary of what the Scriptures teach. While signing represents a sincere pledge to teach, write, and speak in harmony with these confessions, it does not prevent a person from engaging in continuing study, research, or personal reflection on the Scriptures, the creation, or the confessions and the doctrines addressed in them. Signing the *Covenant* does represent an acknowledgment that no person is free to decide for himself or herself, or for the church, what is and what is not a doctrine asserted in these confessions.

2.

Calvin College faculty members are required to be active members in good standing of a congregation in the Christian Reformed Church or a denomination in “ecclesiastical fellowship” with the CRC as defined by the CRC Synod.

The theological tradition of the Christian Reformed Church not only has shaped the college’s history, but it continues to define the college’s mission. The close relationship between the church and college has been the primary source of the college’s identity—the moral, spiritual, confessional, cultural, educational, theological, and historical identity that is indispensable for institutional cohesion and unity of purpose. At the same time, both Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church are part of a broader Reformed confessional tradition, in recognition of which the church membership requirement can be satisfied by affiliation with other denominations with which the CRC enjoys official ties, such as the Reformed Church in America.

3.

Calvin College faculty members are expected to support and promote Christian education at all levels and are normally required to provide their children with Christian schooling for grades K-12. Schools affiliated with Christian Schools International (an association of parent-run schools with traditional ties to the CRC community) are expected to be the primary schools of choice, though exceptions are usually granted for home schooling or enrollment in non-CSI Christian schools.

The Reformed tradition insists that all educational enterprises are religiously grounded, wittingly or unwittingly. So too are public schools, which cannot be considered explicitly Christian, much less Reformed. Calvin College embraces Reformed Christianity as the basis of integrating faith and learning, and expects its faculty members to acknowledge that this tradition has cogency for primary and secondary education as well as for college. Thus, the primary reason for the Christian schooling requirement is to demonstrate commitment to a distinctive Reformed philosophy of education.

Not all Reformed communities have developed Christian day schools, yet the particular CRC community that gave birth to Calvin College did choose long ago to develop such schools as an important means of fulfilling the communal vows, made at baptism, to help parents in rearing their children in the Christian faith. This college is an integral part of a widespread network of schools established in the Reformed tradition, a community from which a substantial portion of the college’s support and enrollment comes and one in which Calvin College has a long history of leadership. Thus, the requirement for Christian schooling is also an important element in maintaining fidelity to a loyal supporting community.

APPLICABILITY

The requirements for membership on the college faculty described above apply to all persons on regular appointment (full-time and reduced-load). Unless an exception is granted, the Covenant for Faculty Members must be signed at the time of the first appointment. In order to provide sufficient time to make an informed decision regarding church membership and schooling, faculty on regular appointment will normally be expected to be in compliance with the church membership and Christian schooling requirements by the beginning of their second year of service on the faculty.

Visiting professors and affiliated and adjunct faculty must support the mission of the college and are encouraged to abide by the requirements; however, their compliance with the requirements is not mandatory.

This summary of requirements is available online at the Provost Office website: calvin.edu/admin/provost/facdocs/fac-requirements.htm. It is based on sections 3.5.1 and 6.13 of the Handbook for Teaching Faculty (calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook).

Complete texts of the confessional texts cited above can be found online at crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions.

A list of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church of North America can be found online at crcna.org/eirc/relationships.