

# **Frequently Asked Questions of the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) related to Certified Christian Educators**

## **What are the amendments?**

The two amendments, 08-F and 08-I, can be found as a part of the Book of Proposed Amendments at [www.pcusa.org/generalassembly/amend.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/generalassembly/amend.htm). Both are related to presbytery voice and vote of certified Christian educators.

## **What is Educator Certification?**

The certification of Christian educators is a process administered by the Educator Certification Council on behalf of the General Assembly Council (G-14.0720). The standards of the process are detailed in the Educator Certification Handbook that provides specifics regarding the two levels of certification. [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators)

## **What are the levels of Educator Certification and what is involved in both?**

### The Certified Christian Educator . . .

. . . has completed a master's degree in Christian education or a related field, or a master of divinity degree OR has previously received certification at the associate level of the process.

. . . has work experience in PC(USA) educational ministries (the equivalent of at least one year full-time)

. . . has completed the required course credits in each of the seven knowledge and skill areas (biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, human and faith development, religious education theory and practice, Presbyterian polity, Presbyterian program and mission, worship and sacraments)

. . . has completed the certification exam while participating in the Reference Group process, containing colleagues, a representative of the session of the congregation, and the presbytery-appointed Certification Advisor

### The Certified Associate Christian Educator . . .

. . . has a bachelor's degree in Christian education or in another field OR has previously been approved as an Enrolled Educational Assistant (the entry non-certified level).

. . . has work experience in PC(USA) educational ministries (the equivalent of at least two years full-time)

. . . has completed the required course credits in each of the six knowledge and skill areas (biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, human and faith development, religious education theory and practice, Presbyterian polity, Presbyterian program and mission)

. . . has completed the certification exam while participating in the Reference Group process, containing colleagues, a representative of the session of the congregation, and the presbytery-appointed Certification Advisor

## **How did these amendments emerge?**

Prior to the Book of Order changes made to chapter 14 in 2007, these two levels were specified with differing privileges. In particular, the 2005/2007 version of G-14.0705c said "The presbytery shall grant the privilege of the floor to the Certified Christian Educator at all its meetings with voice." This applied only to the highest level of certification and made no provision for vote in presbytery.

The 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2006) and the majority of presbyteries approved changes to G-14, including revising the wording of the section related to certified Christian educators. For brevity sake, less specificity was used and the two levels were not detailed while the Educator Certification Council standards remained consistent. As a result of this editorial oversight, several interpretative problems have emerged.

Because the Advisory Committee on the Constitution is the only body able to interpret the constitution, questions were posed to this group for assistance in sorting out the issues. The recommendations of the ACC came before the Church Polity Committee of the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and the General Assembly itself. These amendments are now before the Church as potential changes to our constitution.

### **Why are these amendments before us?**

#### Regarding 08-I:

Clarification was requested regarding the removal of the specificity of the two levels of certification. The terms Certified Christian Educator and Certified Associate Christian Educator were replaced by the universal term “certified Christian educator.” The initial confusion was whether this uncapitalized term

**certified Christian educator  
as opposed to  
Certified Christian Educator**

was included in order to indicate the highest level of certification (usually a capitalized term) or if it was to be inclusive of both levels. The Authoritative Interpretation approved by the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly indicates that the provisions of G-14.0720b are, indeed, inclusive of the two levels of Educator Certification.

This amendment seeks to restore the original intent of the constitution prior to the change in 2007 to grant the privilege of the floor to Certified Christian Educators and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ordained as elders, voice and vote; a provision that did not come in to effect until June 2007. If this amendment passes, presbytery shall grant voice to Certified Christian Educators and shall grant vote to them if they are elders while no specific mention is made of Certified Associate Christian Educators. The Authoritative Interpretation mentioned above would no longer be in effect.

#### Regarding 08-F:

Certified educators are currently the only people in our polity for whom ecclesiastical privileges are given from a national level and imposed upon the presbytery after limited to no involvement by the presbytery itself. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution found that “it is an aberration in our polity that a person is granted the privilege of the floor, or, in the case of elders, full membership privileges without the approval of the body in which those privileges will be exercised . . . The Advisory Committee on the Constitution finds that constitutional amendment is warranted to establish the presbytery’s right to determine whom it will enroll.”

*...during the term of service in  
an educational ministry under  
the jurisdiction of the presbytery*

With this in mind, this amendment adds a requirement of employment in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery as a qualifier of voice and vote for certified educators. If this amendment passes, presbytery voice and vote will apply to certified Christian educators currently

employed by a ministry of the presbytery. This amendment would place certified Christian educators in line with other certified and commissioned church leaders whose function is tied to the term of service in a jurisdiction of the presbytery.

### **If these amendments pass, will retired certified Christian educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators lose the voice and vote granted by the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly?**

Not necessarily. If these amendments pass, presbyteries will retain the right to determine whom they will enroll. Presbyteries will still be able to grant privilege of the floor to certified Christian educators and vote to ordained elders.

