



FAQ regarding the WTS Proposal to General Synod of the Reformed Church in America

At the October 2021 meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Western Theological Seminary (WTS) is presenting a proposed amendment to the WTS Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation.

This amendment would change the governance structure of WTS. It is expected that this change will bring about many mutually beneficial outcomes for both the seminary and the denomination.

Instead of being legally owned and operated by the RCA and the General Synod being the sole agent of the Seminary, WTS would hold official affiliated status, similar to other institutions such as Hope College, Northwestern College, and Central College and would be governed by the WTS Board of Trustees. This will remove barriers, allowing us to build additional partnerships and train even more pastors and Christian leaders around the world.

WTS is celebrating three consecutive years of enrollment growth with well over 370 students currently enrolled. It is our desire to build on this success, and to expand our reach to serve the broader church along with the RCA churches we currently are privileged to serve.

This change supports the RCA's mission of equipping congregations for ministry and being the very presence of Christ in the world. By reaching a wider audience of future pastors and ministry leaders looking for theological education in the Reformed tradition, WTS is helping to equip and grow the Church in the United States and globally.

Why is WTS seeking this change?

Today, one-third of our students are RCA-affiliated. We are serving a diverse group of students and our organizational relationships should reflect this diversity.

Moving to affiliated status will make it easier to bring our commitment to biblical scholarship and the Reformed tradition to students and churches that may otherwise feel excluded under the current model. We want any students interested in theological education to see WTS as a place where they can learn and be formed, regardless of their current denomination affiliations.

What would actually change under this proposal?

This is a governance proposal. We are requesting a change in the governance of Western Theological Seminary to a board-governed institution.

This does not change the “[Statement of Theological Identity](#)” of WTS, which was unanimously approved by the WTS Board of Trustees in 2019. This also does not change Western’s commitment to RCA churches, pastors, or ministries.

Is WTS leaving the RCA?

We cherish our relationships with the RCA and the greater RCA community. WTS is not leaving the RCA. We desire to be an RCA affiliate with a relationship to the RCA similar to Hope College, Northwestern College, and Central College. This is a governance change, not a theological change.

How will you continue to serve the RCA and RCA Pastors?

Should this request be approved, the RCA can continue to expect the following from Western Theological Seminary:

- We will continue to affirm the WTS “[Statement of Theological Identity](#),” which was unanimously approved by the WTS Board of Trustees in 2019 and which affirms the creeds and confessions of the RCA.
- In accordance with the [Book of Church Order](#) (Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 5 [2019 edition, p. 72]) the WTS Board of Trustees will continue to include three trustees who are officially designated by the General Synod as General Synod representatives.
- Western Theological Seminary will continue to provide all requisite courses so that candidates for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament can meet their ordination requirements.
- All students from RCA churches will receive a 25 percent tuition discount. Students currently in ministry or with significant ministry experience can receive additional scholarships up to 40 percent off tuition. **Simply put, any RCA members who are serving in an RCA church can expect to receive significant benefits and notable discounts off Western’s tuition, which we steadfastly strive to make affordable.**
- We regularly see students not previously affiliated with the RCA begin an ordination path with the RCA during their time at WTS. In this way, by reaching a broader base of potential students, we can be a front door for the RCA in recruiting new pastors and ministry leaders.

Will graduates of WTS still be able to be ordained in the RCA?

WTS has been in conversation with MFCA, the RCA body that grants Certificates of Fitness for Ministry (CFMs) to students who attend seminaries that are not agents of General Synod, and currently is working to finalize a plan whereby MFCA will grant a CFM to any student of whom WTS approves through the typical process and who has submitted a Form V to WTS before the end of the academic year (June 30, 2022). This plan will need to be officially approved by the

MFCA Board in its October meeting, but conversations with MFCA representatives have been very positive and promising.

Regardless of this, Western Theological Seminary is committed to providing all courses required by the MFCA so that candidates for the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament in the RCA can meet their ordination requirements. We will also continue to support students as they walk through the ordination process.

If you have additional questions, please contact info@westernsem.edu.