

IN-CARE PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Appendix J: Ordination Paper Guidelines (page 1 of 2)

Congratulations! If you are reading this paper, it means you have graduated from seminary, or will do so very soon. It means all of your required paperwork, including your Ministerial Profile, is in the Association office and you are coming to the end of what surely has been a long journey.

Writing your ordination paper is the first step toward your Ecclesiastical Council, a setting where clergy and lay members of the Association come together to hear a presentation of your paper and vote on whether or not to ordain you (pending an approved call). Your paper tells the Association members who you are and how you got to this point in your faith journey. It also speaks to us about your theology and how it relates to current events.

This guide was put together to assist you in writing your ordination paper and to clarify what is expected of you and of the paper. As you prepare the paper, you will work closely with your Advisor, a sub-committee of readers, and the Pre-Ordination Commission.

But first, some logistics. Inform your Advisor when you are about to complete the first draft of the paper. He or she will then put together a subcommittee to read your draft and make suggestions. The subcommittee will determine when the paper is ready for the Pre-Ordination Commission to review. At that point, your advisor will e-mail the paper to the commission members in advance of your meeting with them. The commission then determines when you and your paper are ready for an Ecclesiastical Council. Please note that the subcommittee and/ or the Commission may require you to make minor, or even major, revisions to your paper. They may also require you to meet with them more than once before approving it. In addition, no date will be set for your Ecclesiastical Council until all Pre-Ordination requirements are met and all of your paperwork has been submitted to the Association office.

Prior to the Ecclesiastical Council you will e-mail your approved paper to the Association office. At this point, your paper will be posted on the Association's website unless you prefer it be e-mailed instead.

As you prepare the ordination paper, please keep in mind your audience. This is not an academic paper written for seminary professors. It is written for clergy and lay people who want to know who you are, what you believe, and what you think. If you are accustomed to using theological language and terms, think of this as an exercise in translation. You must be able to share what you know effectively without using excess professional jargon. The effectiveness of your ministry depends on it.

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Appendix J: Ordination Paper Guidelines (page 2 of 2)

Your ordination paper should be about ten to twelve single-spaced pages long. One section must be about your faith journey. This section should tell us who you are and how you arrived at this place in your life with regard to your faith. It should be approximately three to four pages in length and highlight the important faith issues you have experienced, including your understanding of your call to ministry and why you think ordination is necessary to that call.

The major portion of your paper should address your theology. This section should be approximately seven to eight pages long and should have something substantive to say about the following: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and their interrelationships within the Trinity; the authority of Scripture; the sacraments; sin and evil; and a statement on ministerial ethics. Part of this section should tell us how your theology relates to current events, "real life", ministry, and you.

Finally, your paper should demonstrate your knowledge of the history and polity of the United Church of Christ. This section should be about three to four pages long. It will be presented to your subcommittee and to the Pre-Ordination Commission, but will not be included in your presentation to the Ecclesiastical Council. However, it will be made available to Association members should they request it.

Please keep in mind that, while all of the above needs to be incorporated into a succinct paper, this is not to be seen as a "laundry list" to be checked off one item at a time. The issues to be addressed should be integrated within an overall narrative that tells the story of your path to ordained ministry.

With that, the Pre-Ordination Commission wishes you well on this step of your journey toward possible ordination, and looks forward to reading your paper at the appropriate time.