

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION
OF THE
FINAL ORDINATION/COMMISSIONING/TRANSFER PAPER

The purpose of the paper is to give you an opportunity to articulate your faith, theology, and pastoral practice. Type short essay responses to the following questions and topics. It is our intention that you connect doctrine and experience. We want you to write pastoral, not systematic, theology. A part of this exercise is to demonstrate your ability to concentrate on the salient points and to express your thoughts succinctly. We suggest reading all of the questions before you begin.

Formatting requirements:

- Your paper should be no more than 15 pages in length, single-spaced, and the pages should be numbered.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font.
- On the top, right header of each page please be sure to type your name and the current date. Make sure to update the date in the header every time you rewrite your paper.
- Write out each question in full, then your answer.

This paper is an opportunity for you to express your understanding of faith, ministry, and your own life in an interrelated way. You are presenting yourself as a working pastoral theologian. Answer the questions thoughtfully and honestly, but do not try to write everything you think on the topic. Demonstrate reflective thinking on topics that are unique to the Covenant. Use your own words in completing your responses. Biblical and theological references may be cited but do not include extensive quotes. Pay special attention to spelling and grammar!

Note: use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual responses is prohibited.

When you interview, the conference Committee on Ministerial Standing and the Board of the Ordered Ministry will probably seek additional clarification about what you have written and may ask additional questions about your faith, theology, and life.

These criteria are used for evaluating the paper and the interview:

- Faithfulness to the apostolic witness.
- Articulation of a clear call to vocational ministry.
- Demonstration of spiritual formational practices that sustain pastoral ministry and a growing self-awareness that enables safe ministry practices.
- Conversant and articulate in the distinctives of Covenant theology (for example, can the candidate clearly explain the meaning of the sacraments and demonstrate a breadth of understanding regarding the various models of the atonement?)
- A commitment to collegial and accountable ministry within the community of Covenant pastors and the broader mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

God bless you as you prepare your paper. We hope you will find this assignment to be a wonderful experience of grace and growing in faith.

FINAL QUESTIONS

Write a paper in four parts of no more than 15 pages in length, in which you demonstrate your understanding of Covenant history and practice, as well as communicate your own theology and perspective on ministry. Be sure to respond to all sections of each part.

PART 1 - CALLING and CHARACTER – about 2-3 pages

- What does it mean to you to take on a permanent, lifetime credential? Define your pastoral identity.
- State how you intend to build and maintain a pattern of self-care and self-awareness for your emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological health, including your current spiritual practices, all of which help you stay present to God.
- Reflect on your life and the influences on your character as a minister. Specifically address your trustworthiness and your ethics. Demonstrate how you are and intend to remain a safe person for yourself and others both in your ministry and life.

PART 2 - THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCIES – about 4- 5 pages

- As a Covenant minister, describe
 - o Your understanding of God as expressed in the central doctrine of the Trinity.
 - o The inspiration and authority of scripture.
 - o Your understanding of the kingdom of god.
 - o Your beliefs on the person and work of Jesus Christ, giving special attention to your view of the atonement, including a perspective on the work of P.P. Waldenstrom.
 - o The nature and the mission of the church. Be sure to address the role of the Holy Spirit.
 - o Your theology of hope as it relates to the second coming of Christ.

PART 3 - PRACTICAL PASTORAL COMPETENCIES – about 4-5 pages

- What is the role of evangelism in your life and ministry?
- Within your ministry context, describe the ways you help people understand God's goodness in the midst of suffering and grief. Include your personal experiences of grief and pain and how you deal with them.
- Reflect on each of the core competencies (preach well, teach well, lead well, care well) as it relates to your ministry context. (For those seeking Commissioning or Word and Service, specifically reference your area of specialization describing how it informs these areas.)
- Reflect on the impact human sexuality has on your pastoral ministry and describe your theological perspective on human sexuality. How will you provide pastoral care while also supporting and teaching the ECC's position regarding human sexuality?

PART 4 - COVENANT COMPATIBILITY AND COLLEGIALITY – about 3 pages

- Articulate the Covenant's position on baptism and the Lord's supper as sacraments. Include in your description the distinction between infant baptism and infant dedication. Articulate your own theological perspective on baptism and the Lord's supper.
- The ECC has been ordaining women in pastoral ministry since 1976. Please articulate the theology behind our denomination's belief that women may serve in all roles of pastoral leadership within the church. Describe your theological perspective on women in pastoral leadership. What are you doing to advocate and prepare women for leadership in your ministry setting as well as encourage women who are called to the role of pastor within our denomination?
- Describe the ECC's position on congregational polity and your understanding of pastoral authority within that context. How does this inform your theology and practice of ministry?
- The ECC is committed to moving forward in the area of racial righteousness and multiethnic ministry. (Consult the Six-Fold Test and the 2008 Resolution on Racial Righteousness for context.) Reflect on the biblical foundations for this commitment. Reflect on how your experiences with or without power and privilege have shaped your ministry and life practices. In what ways will you move forward personally on this journey and how will you lead and teach others in your ministry context?
- The reality of freedom in Christ is one of the six affirmations of the ECC. One place this freedom in Christ reveals itself in the ECC is in giving us the security to disagree on the non-essentials of the faith within the unity of a common ministry. What is your understanding of that freedom? What are its limits and responsibilities in pastoral practice and in your relationship to the broader church?