

**Preparing the Ordination Paper**  
(based on the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*)  
*Committee on Ministry: Preparation*  
St. Louis Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference  
United Church of Christ

***Preparation for the Ordination Paper -***

The ordination paper is one major piece of the requirements to qualify for an ordination interview with the Committee on Ministry: Preparation (COM:P). The Documents Checklist for Ordination Interview indicates the various reports, documents, reference letters, etc. that need to be completed and on file at the Conference office.

When a Member in Discernment (MID) is ready to write their ordination paper, a paper review team of three (3) people will be established to be supportive and critical readers and responders for the candidate on the various drafts of the paper before a final version is submitted to the COM:P. This three-person group will consist of the MID's COM:P advisor, one person selected by the MID, and a third person appointed by the COM:P. There should be at least one lay person and at least one clergy person on the committee, along with a balance of gender. It is recommended, if at all possible, that one person in this group be from the MID's home church.

In addition, the MID's home church support committee should read and discuss the ordination paper with the person before sending the official request for an ordination interview to the COM:P. The MID is encouraged to have various readers from different settings review their ordination paper and to consider the feedback given. The MID should strive to develop a paper that is clear, organized and engaging for both lay and clergy readers.

The first draft of the ordination paper should be submitted to the paper review readers in sufficient time for editing and rewriting, if necessary, before it is submitted to the COM:P. The individual readers review the draft and communicate with the MID for feedback and discussion, either meeting with the candidate in person or using some form of technology. This group may request that the MID rework and resubmit the paper as many times as necessary until the members are confident the paper is ready for the COM:P.

Once the review team has approved the ordination paper, the home church has recommended the MID for an ordination interview, and if all the other paperwork from the Documents Checklist for Ordination Interview is completed and on file at the Conference office, the next step is for the COM:P to schedule an ordination interview with the MID. The MID should invite the home church pastor and a lay leader to accompany them to this interview.

### ***Content of the Ordination Paper -***

A final version of the ordination paper is to be submitted to the COM:P at least one month before the scheduled ordination interview. It is to be a three-part paper as described below:

**Part One** of the ordination paper is the MID's theological perspective and grasp of the historic Christian faith. This part is to be seen as a setting forth of one's own theological perspective, not as an academic research paper. There are many ways a candidate could go about writing this paper.

- One way to approach this paper is to articulate what one believes in the context of or in relation to the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith, or in the context of or in relation to paragraph two of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.
- The purpose of part one of the ordination paper is to provide a way for the MID to share their present grasp and understanding of the teaching and traditions of the Christian church down through the ages and to relate this to their own theological perspective (e.g., the Trinity, faith, sin, judgment, salvation, kingdom, grace, justice, peace, righteousness, reconciliation, Biblical authority, sacrament and rites, mission, stewardship, covenant, etc.).
- Part one should be limited to 5-7 pages, double-spaced.

**Part Two** of the ordination paper is intended to provide an opportunity for the MID to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the history, theological roots, polity and practice of the United Church of Christ.

- The MID could write an interpretation of the history and theological roots of the United Church of Christ, referring to and commenting on key dates, persons, events and documents that illustrate their interpretation in addressing the polity and practice issues.
- The MID could identify and define some key words and use them to characterize the polity and practice of the United Church of Christ (e.g., covenant, autonomy, congregational, united and uniting, etc.). The person could illustrate how these understandings make claims on the way they will practice ministry as a United Church of Christ ordained minister.
- Another approach would be to write an interpretation of paragraphs 6, 9, 17, 18 and 19 of the United Church of Christ Constitution.
- Part two should be limited to 5-7 pages, double-spaced.

**Part Three** of the ordination paper is intended to be an integrating statement that invites the MID to relate the faith and practice of the Church to their own pilgrimage of faith and understandings of and intentions for ministry as a person ordained by the United Church of Christ. Following are suggestions for subject matter for part three of the paper:

- The person as a person of faith. What has been their faith pilgrimage? How has understanding of oneself as a person of faith changed and grown during this time of preparation?
- The person as one called to ordained ministry. How has the MID's understanding of call changed or grown during the period of preparation? What is one's understanding of ordination, church, mission, ministry? What is the challenge and vision the MID has for their ministry?
- The person as one called to a particular ordained ministry. What are the MID's gifts for ministry, and how do they see them being used in the type of ministry to which the person is seeking a call? If the person is seeking a call to a pastorate, how does one see themselves functioning as a pastor of a local church? If the MID is seeking a call to a ministry other than in a local church, how does the person see themselves functioning in that kind of ministry or setting? Where does the person see their ministry in five years? If not in a local church, how does one's ministry relate to the local church?
- The person as one called to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. How does the MID understand themselves as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ? What are the person's commitments to the United Church of Christ and the Church Ecumenical? What are those aspects of the history, tradition, polity and practice of the United Church of Christ that are most valued by the person, and how will these shape the way one engages in the tasks of ordained ministry?
- Part three should be limited to 5-7 pages, double-spaced.

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