

1 Section 5. Part 3 Theology of Ministry Paper

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3 Theology of Ministry Paper: Overview

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5 As a candidate for ordination to pastoral ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),  
6 the articulation of your theology is fundamental. Writing a 20 to 25-page paper is a tool  
7 designed for you to explore thematic understandings (theology, Christology, image of worship,  
8 model of ministry etc.) which are essential for the practice of public ministry.

9

10 This paper is designed to pull together the resources, insights and knowledge of your seminary  
11 or graduate school education woven together with personal and cultural awareness for the  
12 purpose of articulating your present “theology of Ministry.” Reflections and knowledge gained  
13 from personal growth, family history, coursework (church history, systematics, ethics, biblical  
14 studies) and your experience and practice of leadership in the church are welcome in this  
15 paper.

16

17 Instructions:

18 Oftentimes a written paper connotes the idea of something completed, finished or done.  
19 However, a paper like this is more like capturing a particular moment in time, which in another  
20 moment can, may and will change. Thus, perfection is not the end goal, the articulated  
21 discovery is in the process.

22

23 As the author of this paper you are invited to approach this task as a conversation with the  
24 Commission on Ministry and your In-Care Committee. The paper is both relational and  
25 conversational. An opportunity for you to articulate of insights and understandings.

26

27 The questions below are offered as a way to process and focus your thinking, emotions and  
28 questions about your theology of ministry. You are encouraged to treat this paper holistically  
29 rather than ten separate areas to be queried. You are welcome to link comments or responses,  
30 for example, your Christology might be linked to your pastoral approach or the mission of the  
31 church.

32

33 It is essential that you set aside enough time to write this paper. There is a rhythm to writing a  
34 paper of this magnitude – write for a little while, take a break, get some fresh air, do something  
35 else, then come back review and write some more. Consider each writing a draft to be re-  
36 written. Read it out loud to yourself or someone else, or invite a friend or colleague to read it  
37 and respond before submitting.

38

39 You are invited to be self-revelatory in the process of writing. It is appropriate to write in the  
40 first person singular “I”. The readers are not looking for you to give “right answers” or “sound  
41 smart”, but ask you to capture and illuminate that which is essential and authentic. Include  
42 personal experiences that are relevant and formative to your theological and vocational  
43 understandings.

44

45 In some subjects below you are welcome to evoke a particular setting or incident, by writing a  
46 friend, creating a scenario or sitting around a table. If those images don't work well for you,  
47 create another setting, or find your own way to address the question.

48

49 You are encouraged to use references, quotations from sacred texts or theologians, course  
50 work, readings, poetry, or works from artists and musicians which enhance your discussion  
51 and/or clarifies your current thinking and insights. Your notes or footnotes may be placed in the  
52 body of your writing, rather than formal footnoting.

53

54 The Areas to be Addressed: These are prompts for you to consider and do not imply a preferred  
55 structure to your paper.

56

57 1. Describe your view of the Trinity?

- 58 • What is your view of God? Articulate your understanding of God's nature,  
59 characteristics and/or image derived from experience, story, teaching, and/or text.  
60 Identify how that view has or is changing and where uncertainties and ambiguities exist.  
61 Is there a metaphor which best expresses your image of God?
- 62 • What is your Christology? Discuss the nature, mission, ministry and teaching of Jesus.  
63 Jesus used the phrase "Kingdom of God," what did that mean in his cultural setting?  
64 Which of these titles attributed to Jesus ("Messiah," "Son of God," "Son of Man,"  
65 "Prince of Peace," "Lord," "King," "Christ," and etc.); communicates best for you and  
66 why?
- 67 • What is your understanding of the Spirit? Discuss the nature and work of the spirit,  
68 individual and communal aspects of the spirit, and how it relates to the church and your  
69 understanding of spiritual gifts, your own vocation.

70

71 2. Describe your participation in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

- 72 • How would you describe the essentials or tenets of the Christian Church (Disciples of  
73 Christ) consider these theological, liturgical and missional themes?
- 74 • How would you describe what the "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)" means to  
75 someone who has never heard that denomination or tradition before?
- 76 • Thinking about your personal history, your call to ministry; why do you wish to be  
77 ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?

78

79 3. Describe the role and importance of sacred text or Judeo/Christian scriptures in the life of  
80 the church. What is your personal understanding of scripture?

81

82 4. Describe "the nature, purpose and mission" of the church today. How might you describe the  
83 importance of the church or religious community to someone who does not participate in it?  
84 What would be your approach, how would you engage them, what other questions would  
85 surface?

86

87 5. Describe and discuss your understanding of sin and the problem of evil in the world? You  
88 might also address the concept of salvation, atonement, or reconciliation.

89

90 6. Describe your understanding and vision of ministry

91 • Explain your vision or model of ministry. Describe the essential characteristics of your  
92 vision or mode.

93 • How has your understanding of ministry been changed or challenged in the past 5  
94 years?

95 • Identify and describe the community you would like to work in and what kind of  
96 ministry do you see yourself doing after ordination and beyond?

97 • Describe your pastoral identity, your professional gifts or strengths, things about  
98 ministry that you are drawn to and things you don't want to do. Name your passion as  
99 well as your fears for ministry.

100

101 7. From your academic studies or personal reading, identify eight to ten of the most important  
102 or influential authors who have shaped and/or helped you clarify any of the central themes  
103 named above. List the titles, authors, and provide 2 to 3 sentences about the impact of the  
104 writing. This can be embedded in your paper, or added as an annotated bibliography.

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107 Approved by COM 9/19/2019

108 Revised by COM 6/17/2021