

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY, SECTION A
Northern California Nevada Conference, United Church of Christ

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF THE ORDINATION PAPER
for those seeking authorization for ordained ministry

A.) FORMAT

Use a word processor such as Microsoft Word. Remember that your paper will be submitted electronically. Double-space and use a standard, readable font. PLEASE SPELLCHECK. Use the header (or footer) function of your word processor to insert your name and a page number on every page. Use footnotes or endnotes as appropriate, but do not overwhelm your work with citations. COM wants to hear from you; not every theologian or spiritual thinker you have ever read.

There is no hard and fast limitation on length, but *generally* a length of 18-25 pages is appropriate. Develop your paper with enough lead time to have 1-3 readers of your choosing look it over and make suggestions. Leave time to reflect on, and incorporate, their input, so that your paper may be submitted 4 weeks in advance of your scheduled COM appointment.

B.) CONTENT

1) **Read the description in the UCC Manual on Ministry of the three general topics to be addressed in the paper.** You may write them in any order, however, “telegraph” to the reader – by appropriate introductions and/or headings – what topic you are addressing. You are welcome to use a device other than standard outline form to structure your work (e.g. the UCC Statement of Faith, the words of a hymn or prayer, or a piece of art meaningful to you) However, make sure your organization is clear and please ensure that you do cover the three major topics.

(a) **Theology.** This section communicates two things:

- Your understanding (and struggles with) *basic topics in systematic theology* – God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, sin/evil, redemption/salvation, atonement, sacraments, scripture, the authority of the church; and
- *Your personal theological perspective*, born of experience and study, and seen through the lens of your own sense of call – is it as prophet, pastor, preacher/teacher, or priest? How do you see your theology being “lived out” in your ministry?

-(b) **History/Polity.** This section communicates that you have a solid understanding of the formative influences and persons in the history, theology, and polity of the United Church of Christ. However, more important than lengthy recitation of dates and names is critical engagement with the UCC today. What are its great strengths and gifts? Where are its issues and challenges? Do not be afraid to give your personal critique of the denomination in which you are seeking a leadership role.

(c) **Spiritual Journey and Call to Ministry.** Describe briefly how your spiritual journey has brought you to this point. What has emerged? What remains yet unfinished? What is your current hope or understanding for your call to ministry? How, and by what spiritual practices, does God continue to speak in your life? Why do you feel you need to be ordained to do what you are called to do?

2) **Remember that the members of the Committee on Ministry will not be your last readers.** If you receive a positive recommendation, your paper will next need to be given to your Association for the Ecclesiastical Council. Some in attendance may never have read such a paper, so when you write your paper, bear this in mind. Choose vocabulary engaging and meaningful to a wide range of people. Be prepared to explain more “difficult” topics in your oral presentation, or in response to questions, both to COM, and most especially to your Ecclesiastical Council. Most of the recommendations which the COM gives for modification of ordination papers are to improve its organization or mode of expression for the Ecclesiastical Council.