The Ministry Committee
Christian Church in Illinois/Wisconsin
Required Papers
For Candidates for Commissioned/Ordained Ministry

Introduction:

As a part of the process of getting to know one another and exploring issues related both to one's *call to* and one's *fitness for* ministry, the Ministry Committee asks all candidates for commissioned or ordained ministry to submit four papers. They are: (1) a spiritual autobiography, (2) a paper expounding the candidate's concept of ministry, (3) a paper explaining the candidate's understanding of the nature of the church, and (4) a paper dealing with the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Spiritual Autobiography:

The first paper in the series focuses upon your own story and how you came to a conviction of being called to ministry.

In asking you to write this paper the Ministry Committee is particularly interested in learning about those people, events, books, or other influences that shaped your sense of vocation, or calling, to commissioned or ordained ministry. These might include family or friends, summer camp experiences, school, previous employment, pivotal/defining moments, etc. What you look back upon and identify as influential and formative of your sense of call is as interesting to the Ministry Committee as what you choose to say about those people, experiences, or events.

In short, how did you come to be called to the ministry? And what is the nature of that call?

This paper should be approximately 5 double-spaced typewritten pages in length.

Concept of Ministry:

Having explored the spiritual journey that led you to a sense of calling to the ministry, in this second paper you are asked to reflect upon the nature of the ministry to which you have been called.

What does it mean to be a commissioned or ordained minister? Does a minister have a role to play in the church and in the world that is different from a Christian who is not a minister? If so, what is the nature of that difference?

You might also wish to reflect upon the different forms commissioned or ordained ministry takes and the form(s) to which you feel called.

"Fitness for ministry" is an important discernment issue for the Ministry Committee. Therefore, we would like for you to reflect upon ways you feel yourself fit for ministry, where you feel you have some "growing edges," and what kind of preparation for ministry you believe you need.

This paper should be no more than six to eight double-spaced pages (approximately 1500 to 2000 words).

Ecclesiology:

For the third paper the candidate is asked to reflect upon the church universal in which s/he will practice ministry.

The Ministry Committee is interested in learning about your beliefs and concepts concerning what the Church is, why it exists, and what is its role in the lives of faith seekers and the world. One approach might be to explore the scripture verse or theological model/metaphor that is most meaningful to you about the Church. Another approach might be to imagine that you have been called upon to preach a sermon about the Church; what would you say?

Thematically, you might wish to discuss topics such as: the church as "the body of Christ," the church as "a fellowship of believers," the nature and role of sacraments, the concept of the "priesthood of all believers," or the role of the commissioned or ordained minister in the church. Please note that these are only suggestions; there are other topics about which you might wish to write.

This paper should be no more than six to eight double-spaced pages (approximately 1500 to 2000 words).

Disciples History and Polity:

The fourth, and final paper, will be written after you have completed the Disciples of Christ history and polity course. In this paper you are asked to focus upon and address the unique and attractive "distinctives" of this denominational tradition. In other words, within the context of ecclesiology you are now asked to focus more narrowly upon one particular manifestation of the universal church.

More specifically: Imagine that you are speaking to someone who is generally familiar with the Christian tradition but who is "unchurched" and is seeking a church home. S/he asks you, "Who are these Disciples of Christ? What do they believe or practice that might make them an attractive church home for me?"

How would you reply?

This paper should be no more than eight to ten double-spaced pages (approximately 2000-2500 words) in length.