

License Leading to Certificate 2008 EFCA Statement of Faith

Paper Requirements

Overview

This provides information to assist you in preparing for the required thesis. Papers are to conform to the format or they will be returned for modification.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF LICENSING

1. These requirements are an attempt to have more standardized papers with responses to the most critical issues given by all candidates.
2. The primary purpose of the license is to identify theological competency and alignment with the EFCA. Since it is temporary, it is valid for three years and leads either to the Certificate of Christian Ministry (which focuses on theological proficiency) or the Certificate of Ordination (which focuses on theological mastery). (In the case of the Student and Lay Ministry Licenses, both will use the same License Requirements, which needs to be renewed every three years.)
3. You will defend the biblical foundation of the Statement of Faith by responding concisely to the specific questions under the various articles under the “Doctrinal Section.” This will also be done under the “Pastoral and Personal Section.”
4. You are expected to demonstrate that you can interact faithfully with the text of the Bible, both in the written paper and the oral defense.
5. Unless arrangements are made for an alternative process, the paper will be presented in English.

SPECIFICS OF THE PAPER

1. The paper should be fifteen (15) to twenty (20) pages in length, double-spaced, full justification, using a twelve point font, Times New Roman.
2. Please quote each article of the Statement of Faith in the paper, single-spaced and bold, just prior to your written support. Please see the following link: <http://www.efca.org/about-efca/statement-faith>
3. The majority of the paper will focus on the “Doctrinal Section.” The “Biographical Section” should include 1-2 pages; the “Pastoral and Personal Section” should include 2-3 pages; the “Doctrinal Section” should include about 15 pages. For example, a general breakdown for a 20 page licensing paper would be the following: 2 pages “Biographical Section; 15 pages “Doctrinal Section”; 3 pages “Pastoral and Personal Section.”
4. Be concise and precise. Substance is more important than volume. It is expected that the thesis will demonstrate competency in both theology and the use of language to communicate truth about God and the world. To this end, it is recommended that you seek out a mentor who can help with both the biblical and theological content and the writing style and grammar of the paper.
5. State your convictions plainly without saying “I believe . . .”; save that for issues of personal opinion.

6. In writing your paper you have the option of either responding directly to the questions (using GATEWAY's guidelines, "How to Write a Paper") or using the questions as a guide to write what you believe about each article. In either approach, do not supply cursory, bullet point answers or responses to the questions.
7. Include references to biblical texts in your paper, not direct quotes from those texts of Scripture. References to biblical texts should be included in close proximity to assertions of truth being made. It is expected you will be able to reference key biblical texts from memory in your council.
8. Quotations from other scholars are to be avoided, or used minimally. Though you will consult, read and use sources, this is a paper expounding what you believe. Do not engage in plagiarism, either intentional or unintentional. It is a matter of integrity and truthfulness and speaks to your character. If discovered it will be addressed strongly and will affect your process of credentialing.
9. The paper must conform to these requirements or it will be returned to your for modification before the paper can be submitted to your District Council.

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. It is important that you contact the District Office to begin the licensing process.
2. The completed paper is to be sent to the District Office per their instruction. Your District may want both electronic and hard copies. Please check on and follow your District's procedures.
3. You will be required to defend this paper, including how the doctrine affects your practical pastoral ministry, with members of a council appointed by the District (cf. *Steps Toward for Credentialing* for the make-up of the council). Licensing councils generally last about one and one-half hours.
4. If you have questions concerning any part of this process, please call the District Office.

Paper

BIOGRAPHICAL SECTION (1-2 PAGES)

1. Briefly describe your own conversion to faith in Jesus Christ and, if married, the conversion experience of your spouse to faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Briefly give an account of your call to ministry and, if married, your spouse's attitude towards this call.
3. Briefly describe your preparation, both academic and non-academic, i.e. formal and non-formal, for credentialed ministry.

DOCTRINAL SECTION (15-16 PAGES)

In this section of the thesis, you are required to relate your personal doctrinal convictions about the various elements found in the Statement of Faith of The Evangelical Free Church of America. As stated above, though the "thesis requirements" are in a question format, do not include the questions in your paper. Write your paper in prose, not outline form. You are not merely to answer the questions. Please include Scripture references that support the biblical and theological statements made in your paper, and list the references canonically (e.g. "God loves the world" (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:8)).

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

1. What does it mean that God is creator and why is it important? Include your view of creation.
2. Explain your understanding of the being of God and the doctrine of the Trinity, including your understanding of the attributes of God.
3. Why is it necessary, or important, to have a working understanding of the nature and attributes of God?
4. What does it mean that God has “limitless knowledge and sovereign power” and what is its significance?

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

1. Explain the terms “revelation,” “verbally inspired,” “ultimate authority” and “illumination.”
2. What do you understand by the term “inerrant” when used of Scripture? How would you distinguish between “inerrant” and “infallible?”
3. How do you defend the canon, the Old and New Testaments, the 66 books of the Bible?
4. How does your view of the inerrancy and authority of Scripture affect specific aspects of your ministry such as study, preaching, teaching, counseling, leadership training, etc.?
5. How do you understand, and what is the implication of the last sentence in this article?

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

1. What does it mean that Adam and Eve were created in the image of God?
2. How do you understand the fall of humanity and its effects? What is the significance of being in “union with Adam?”
3. How do you understand “sinners by nature and by choice?”
4. What does it mean to be “rescued, reconciled and renewed?”

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

1. Explain your understanding of the union of divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ.
2. What is the significance of Jesus being “Israel’s promised Messiah,” and why are the incarnation, the virgin birth and sinless life essential?
3. What was the nature of Christ Jesus’ “emptying” in Philippians 2:7?
4. Explain your understanding of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. How do you understand the present role of Jesus Christ?

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

1. What does it mean that Jesus is “our representative and substitute?”
2. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ bring about our salvation? Include the concepts of expiation and propitiation.
3. What is meant by “salvation?” Include the concept of atonement.
4. What is the importance of the exclusivity of Jesus’ death and resurrection being the “only ground for salvation?”

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

1. What are some specific ways the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ? Include the concepts of regeneration and adoption.
2. How do you understand the teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit found in 1 Corinthians 12:13? What is the difference between the baptism, indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit?
3. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit “indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers for Christ-like living and service?”
4. Explain your understanding of the nature, purpose and duration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. What is the fruit of the Spirit, and how does it differ from the gifts of the Spirit?

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership

should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

1. Explain justification, grace and faith and how they relate to one another. How do these terms relate to "Christ alone" and the "true church?"
2. What does the Bible mean when it describes Jesus as Lord and Head of the Church and the Church as the Body of Christ?
3. What is your view about the necessity for and practice of baptism?
4. What is your view about the necessity for and practice of the Lord's Supper?
5. Explain the importance of the two ordinances of the church in the life of God's people.

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

1. How do you understand the statement "autonomous but interdependent congregations of like faith and congregational government," specifically focusing on "autonomous," "interdependent congregations," and "congregational government."
2. Under Christ, how does the congregation function? What role do leaders have in a congregational form of government?
3. Why is congregationalism significant in the EFCA?

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

1. How do you understand the doctrine of sanctification? How is it related to justification?
2. What does it mean "to live out our faith?"
3. What is the church's responsibility towards the poor, aliens, and other disenfranchised persons?
4. How do you understand spiritual warfare, and what is the role of "God's Word, the Spirit's power and fervent prayer in Christ's name?"

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

1. Explain your understanding of the second coming of Jesus Christ, including your views on the tribulation, and a defense of premillennialism.
2. Why do you believe that Christ's return will be personal and bodily?

3. How do you understand “constant expectancy” in relationship to Christ’s return?
4. How should views about future things affect the lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ?

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

1. What is the Gospel message? What does it mean to receive the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you believe that Christ is the only way to salvation?
2. Explain your views regarding the eternal destiny of those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.
3. What happens to a person when he or she experiences death during this present age?
4. What is the biblical nature of Hell? Will it last forever?
5. How do you understand “the new heaven and the new earth?”

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL SECTION (2-4 PAGES)

Under “Current Doctrinal Issues” and “Issues Related to Life-Style,” please respond to each numbered item with 2-4 sentences.

Current Doctrinal Issues

Explain your views of the biblical teaching regarding the following topics and how those views affect your practice of ministry.

1. Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage
2. Abortion, Infanticide, Euthanasia
3. Role Distinctions for Men and Women in the Home and the Church
4. Homosexual Belief and Conduct (and other sexual perversions of God’s design for human sexuality)

Issues Related to Lifestyle

The candidate will state his views of the Scriptures and personal practices about the following:

1. Spiritual Disciplines
2. Stewardship, Personal Finances, and Debt
3. Moral Purity (Including Pornography)
4. Marriage and Family Priorities

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA: Please respond to these questions with a yes or no. If it is necessary to clarify your answer, please write a brief explanatory response.

1. The Evangelical Free Church of America purposely allows latitude in significant areas of doctrine (e.g. the age of the universe, Arminianism and Calvinism, the use of the gifts of the Spirit particularly the miraculous gifts, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the tribulation, etc.). This has been referred to as the "significance of silence," viz. we will debate these issues, but we will not divide over them. Are you willing to minister alongside those whose views differ from yours on nonessential matters?
2. Are you in harmony with the mission of the EFCA "to glorify God by multiplying healthy churches among all people," as well as our distinctives? Please see the following link: <http://www.efca.org/about-efca/who-we-are/distinctives-evangelical-free-church-america>
3. Are you willing to live in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and policies of the EFCA? (This does not mean that you may not support a change to any of them through the proscribed process, cf. the next question.) Please see the following link: <http://www.efca.org/files/document/office-of-the-president/efca-articles-of-incorporation-and-bylaws.pdf>
4. Are you willing to follow and adhere to the congregational processes at the local church, district and national conference level in seeking changes in the programs or policies of the EFCA?
5. Is it your intention and desire to work in cooperation with the EFCA and the district in which you serve?
6. If at any time you change your doctrinal beliefs and/or find yourself in disagreement with the statement of faith and/or policies of the EFCA, would you be willing to surrender your credentials to the EFCA?
7. Is there any area or issue in your life which, if known because it has not been dealt with responsibly in a way that can be attested by spiritually mature believers, would bring disrepute on the Lord or the Church (drunkenness, gambling, plagiarism, pornography, racism, addictions, felony or "things like these" (Gal. 5:19-21))?

Add any additional personal convictions or comments relative to the previous sections that you believe would be helpful or important in the process of securing EFCA credentials.

Approved by the EFCA Board of Ministerial Standing – July 2009