

Certificate of Ordination

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 THE CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION

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 Certificate of Ordination (COO) is to affirm theological mastery. (This expands on the License, which focuses on theological competency and alignment with the EFCA, and is distinguished from the Certificate of Christian Ministry, which focuses on theological proficiency.)
3. You will defend the biblical and theological foundation of the Statement of Faith by responding concisely to the specific theological items listed under the various articles in the “Doctrinal Section.” It is not required that you interact with all the questions listed, but you will be responsible to respond to the questions if asked by the council. This will also be done under the “Pastoral and Personal Section,” in which you are required to respond to each listed item.
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 thirty-five (35) to forty (40) pages in length, double-spaced, full justification (one inch margins), 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 4-6 pages; the “Doctrinal Section” should include about 30-32 pages. For example, a general breakdown for a 40 page ordination paper would be the following: 2 pages “Biographical Section”; 32 pages “Doctrinal Section”; 6 pages “Pastoral and Personal Section.”
4. Be concise and precise. Substance is more important than volume. It is expected that the thesis will demonstrate mastery 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 writing on the doctrinal themes (noted in the subheadings) in a theological commentary format, responding directly to the numbered questions (using GATEWAY's guidelines, "How to Write a Paper") or using the numbered questions as a guide to write what you believe about each article. In any of these approaches, do not supply cursory, bullet point answers. Please note – it is not mandatory to interact with all the questions in your paper, but you need to know responses because you may be asked these questions during the council.
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 you for modification before the paper can be submitted to your District Council.

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. It is important that you contact the District Office to complete the credentialing process, to move from the temporary license to the permanent COO.
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, including members from the local church where you serve (cf. *Steps Toward for Credentialing* for the make-up of the council). Ordination councils generally last about four 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 you are married, the conversion experience of your wife to faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Briefly give an account of your call to ministry and, if you are married, your wife'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 (30-32 PAGES)

In this section you are required to write on each article of the Statement of Faith following the guidelines in the "Specifics of the Paper" as noted above. Please include Scripture references that support the biblical and theological statements made in your paper, and list the references in canonical order (e.g. "God loves the world (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:8).") or in order of their strength of support, the strongest supporting verses first (e.g. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8; Jn. 3:16).").

Preamble

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

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.

◆ Creator and Creation

1. What does it mean that God is the Creator? Why is this important?
2. How do you interpret Genesis 1?
3. How does your interpretation of Genesis 1 relate to your view of Scripture?

◆ Attributes

4. Describe the essential attributes of God. Why is it necessary, or important, to have a working understanding of the nature and attributes of God?
5. What does it mean that God is holy? What are the implications of his holiness?

◆ Trinity

6. Describe the doctrine of the Trinity. How do you teach this doctrine from Scripture?
7. What is the importance of the truth that God, as “three equally divine Persons,” eternally exists “in a loving unity?”
8. Describe one contemporary denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. Why is it heretical?

◆ Limitless Knowledge and Sovereign Power (Open Theism)

9. What does it mean that God has “limitless knowledge and sovereign power”? Why is this significant in contemporary debates about God?

◆ Gracious Purpose to Redeem

10. What is the significance of God graciously purposing from eternity to redeem a people for Himself?

◆ Make All Things New for His Glory

11. How does redemption relate to the creation? What impact does your view have for our present stewardship of the earth’s resources?

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.

◆ Old and New Testaments, Canon

1. Explain your understanding of the development of the canon of Scripture.
2. What are the canonical issues involved with Mark 16:9-20? John 7:53-8:11?
3. Describe one modern day canonical dispute. How would you respond to it?

◆ Inspiration

4. How do you understand the process of inspiration and its result? What implications does this doctrine have on your life and ministry?
5. What do the words “verbally inspired” mean?

◆ Inerrancy

6. What is “inerrancy,” and why is it important? What does it mean that this concept is applied to “the original writings”? How do inerrancy and infallibility relate?
7. Are modern translations of the Bible inerrant? How are they reliable?

◆ Complete Revelation

8. What is the difference between general and special revelation?
9. How helpful is general revelation when it comes to knowing God, viz. is it salvific?
10. What does the clarity of Scripture mean and what are its implications?
11. What does it mean, both doctrinally and practically, that the Scriptures are sufficient?

◆ Ultimate Authority

12. In relation to how and what we know, why is it important to state that the Scripture, God’s Word, is “the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged?”

◆ Believed, Obeyed, Trusted

13. Regarding the truth of God’s Word, what is to be your response? What is the implication for your life and ministry?

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.

◆ Adam and Eve, Image of God

1. What does it mean that Adam and Eve were created in the image of God? What are the implications of this doctrine for us today?

◆ Fall

2. How do you understand the fall of humanity and its effects?
3. What does the fall teach us about the nature of sin?

◆ Satan

4. Who is Satan, and what role does he play in the fall of Adam and Eve? What is he working to accomplish today?

◆ Union with Adam, Sinners by Nature and by Choice

5. How do you understand “union with Adam?” What does it mean that we “are sinners by nature and by choice”? Briefly explain these concepts from Romans 5:12-21.

◆ Alienation from God

6. What does it mean that we are alienated from God?

◆ God's Wrath

7. What does the wrath of God mean and what is its significance?

◆ Rescued, Reconciled and Renewed

8. From what are we rescued? To whom are we reconciled? How are we renewed?
9. Why is it important to state exclusively that this work is accomplished only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ?

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.

- ◆ God Incarnate, Fully God and Fully Man, One Person in Two Natures
 1. What is the significance of the incarnation? Why was it necessary for our salvation?
 2. Explain your understanding of the Hypostatic Union of Jesus Christ. How do you understand Phil 2:7?
 3. What were some of the Christological heresies as the early church attempted to understand and explain the hypostatic union?

- ◆ Israel's Promised Messiah (Relation to Prophecy)
 4. Why is it important that Jesus be known as "Israel's promised Messiah?" What is its importance for our understanding of Jesus? What about our understanding of the Bible?

- ◆ Virgin Birth
 5. What is the virgin birth, why is it essential, and what is its significance for our understanding of christology and soteriology?

- ◆ Sinless Life, Crucifixion
 6. What is the significance of Jesus' perfect obedience (both active and passive) for our salvation?
 7. Could Jesus have sinned? How do you understand the temptations?
 8. Why did Jesus die?

- ◆ Bodily Resurrection, Ascension and Session
 9. What is the importance of Jesus' resurrection?
 10. How do you understand the nature of Jesus' resurrection body?
 11. What is the significance of the ascension and session of Jesus Christ?

- ◆ High Priest and Advocate
 12. What is the significance of Jesus' ministry as High Priest and Advocate and how does this affect your life and ministry?

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.

◆ Representative and Substitute

1. What is it about Jesus' person and work that accomplishes our salvation?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is "our representative and substitute?"

◆ Shed Blood on the Cross

4. Why was Jesus' shed blood necessary for our salvation?
5. Why is the centrality of the cross essential?

◆ Perfect, All-Sufficient Sacrifice for Sin

6. What is the significance of Christ's sacrificial death being "perfect" and "all-sufficient?" What is the value and necessity of His death?
7. How does the fact that this is the only way in which our sin is addressed compare with those embracing a wider hope of salvation beyond Christ and His work?

◆ Atonement, Propitiation, Expiation, Redemption, Reconciliation

8. What is atonement? Define propitiation and expiation, and explain the difference.
9. Define redemption (cf. article 1). What does it mean to be reconciled to God and what is its significance?
10. What is your understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:21? Explain your view of "imputation."

◆ Victorious Resurrection

11. Why is Jesus' resurrection considered as an element of our salvation?
12. What is the significance that Jesus' resurrection is "victorious?" Who and what did Jesus overcome?

◆ Only Ground of Salvation

13. What does it mean that Jesus' work is the "only ground for salvation?"
14. What does "salvation" mean biblically? Explain your understanding of it.

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.

◆ Person

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

◆ Purpose (in both the Old and New Testaments)

2. How is the ministry of the Holy Spirit similar and dissimilar between the old and new covenants?

3. Why did the Holy Spirit come, viz. why did Jesus send “another?” What does it mean that the Holy Spirit “glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ?”

◆ Convicting the World

4. Why is the ministry of the Holy Spirit essential in the “world?” What is the guilt of which He convicts?

◆ Regenerating Sinners

5. What is “regeneration?” Where in the order of salvation does regeneration occur?

6. How do you understand the teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit from 1 Cor 12:13? Regarding the Holy Spirit’s ministry, what are the differences between baptism, indwelling, filling and walking?

7. What does it mean that you are in “union with Christ?”

8. What is the meaning and significance of “adoption?”

◆ Indwelling Believers

9. What are biblical evidences of the work of the Holy Spirit?

10. What role do the gifts of the Spirit play in the body of Christ? Is that role different today than during apostolic times?

11. How are the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit similar? How are they different? How do they function in your life?

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.

◆ Justification

1. How do you understand “justification” (cf. Romans 3:21-26)?

◆ God’s Grace Through Faith Alone in Christ Alone

2. Define “grace” and “faith” and explain how grace and faith in Christ are related to justification.
3. What is the significance of the emphasis on “alone?”

◆ Body of Christ, Jesus Christ as Head of Church

4. How are the scriptural metaphors of “the body of Christ,” “the bride of Christ,” and “the Head of the Church” to be understood?

◆ True Church and Local Church

5. What is the relationship between the “true church” and the “local church?”

◆ Local Church

6. What does it mean to be a “believers’ church?” Why is membership important for a local church? What responsibilities do members have in a local church?
7. Address the various types of church government. What is the biblical defense of congregationalism?
8. Within congregationalism, how should the Pastor(s), Church Board (Elders and Deacons), and Congregation function together for effective church ministry?
9. What is your understanding of the statement that the “EFCA shall be an association and fellowship of autonomous but interdependent congregations of like faith and congregational government?” What does “autonomous but interdependent” mean? Why is denominational affiliation important for you and the congregation?

◆ Ordinances

10. What is the meaning and purpose of baptism? What are the various modes of baptism?
11. What is the meaning and purpose of the Lord’s Supper? What are the various ways this is understood?
12. How do baptism and the Lord’s Supper relate to one another, i.e. is there a biblical order? How do they “confirm and nourish the believer?”

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.

◆ Relationship Between Justifying Grace and Sanctifying Power and Purpose

1. How do you understand the doctrine of sanctification? How is it related to justification?
2. What is the purpose and function of “works” in the life of the believer?
3. What is the relationship between a believer’s sanctification and assurance?

◆ Great Commandment

4. Why is love for God preeminent and why is this at the heart of understanding the Ten Commandments and is considered the first and greatest commandment of the whole of the Christian life? How does this relate to other gods and idolatry?
5. How does our preeminent love for God (and God’s prior love of us) serve as the basis for our love for others? Is there an importance to this order?

◆ Living Out Our Faith

6. Why is it important to distinguish between “the faith” understood as a body of truth and “faith” understood as the way in which one lives, viz. having been justified by faith, we live by faith?
7. Living out our faith begins with “the household of faith,” which is evidenced in “care for one another.” Why is this important?
8. What is the biblical teaching of “the poor” and “the oppressed?”
9. How do you understand the local church’s responsibility and role in the world, particularly ministering with compassion and justice?

◆ Combating Spiritual Forces of Evil

10. What is spiritual warfare? How should we combat the spiritual forces of evil?

◆ Christ’s Commission to Make Disciples

11. What is the importance of the command to “make disciples” and what are the God-ordained means of doing that?
12. The scope of this ministry is “all people.” Support this biblically and explain the importance and practical outworking of this in the local church.
13. Why is it important to distinguish between the gospel and the entailments of the gospel? How does the gospel relate to deeds of mercy and compassion? What are the implications of equating them (e.g. the social gospel), and what are the implications of creating an absolute disjunction between them?
14. We are always to bear witness to the gospel in both proclamation (“in word”) and in life (“in deed”)? Give examples of how we can witness to the gospel “in...deed.”

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.

◆ Personal, Bodily and Premillennial Return

1. Briefly describe your position on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Include your views on the tribulation, the rapture of the church, and the millennium.
2. How is your view different from other positions on the millennium? Please define the other positions.
3. Why is it essential to state explicitly that Christ's return is "personal" and "bodily?"

◆ Israel and the Church

4. What is your understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Church as it pertains to eschatology? Comment on Rom 11:25-27.
5. How do you understand Jesus' teaching of the kingdom and how does the kingdom relate to eschatology?

◆ Effect on the Believer

6. Why is it important to include a statement of humility regarding the exact time of Christ's return, viz. "at a time known only to God?"
7. How do you understand biblically "constant expectancy," and what does it mean to live this way? What is the importance of the word "demands?"
8. How do you define and understand the "blessed hope?" How does the biblical teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ's return bring you hope?
9. How does Christ's return motivate you "to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission?"

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.

◆ God Commands All to Believe the Gospel, Repenting and Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ

1. What is the gospel? Is the gospel a universal message?
2. What does it mean to “believe the gospel,” viz. what is the importance of belief?
3. Define “repentance.” What is the role of repentance in conversion?
4. What does it mean to “receive the Lord Jesus Christ?”
5. What is the importance of the universal command to believe, the exclusivity of believing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal consequences grounded in ones response to Jesus?

◆ Bodily Resurrection of the Dead and Judgment of All

6. What is the importance of the “bodily” resurrection of the dead (note Jesus’ bodily resurrection and bodily return), and what does this teach us about humanity?
7. What is your understanding of the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20?
8. Will believers face future judgment? Explain the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:10, cf. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

◆ Unbeliever Condemned to Eternal Conscious Punishment

9. What is the destiny of unbelievers? What is the destiny of the unevangelized? What does it mean that unbelievers are condemned?
10. What is the nature of Hell, and does “eternal conscious punishment” mean?

◆ Believer to Eternal Blessedness and Joy with the Lord

11. What happens to a believer who dies before the return of Christ?
12. How do you describe “heaven” and “life after death?”

◆ New Heaven and New Earth

13. What is the relationship of the “new heaven and new earth” to the millennial Kingdom of Christ?

◆ To the Praise of His Glorious Grace (Doxology)

14. Why is it fitting to conclude a doctrinal Statement of Faith with a worshipful (doxological) note?

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL SECTION (4-6 PAGES)

Under “Current Doctrinal Issues” and “Issues Related to Lifestyle,” please respond to each numbered item with a short paragraph.

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 (and other bioethical matters)
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)
5. Theology of Worship

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. Sexual Purity (Including Pornography)
4. Marriage and Family Priorities
5. Social Drinking of Alcohol
6. Accountability in Life and Ministry

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 prescribed 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 – January 2010