

Guidelines for an Ecclesiastical Council – SASNCUCC

When a Member in Discernment (MID) has successfully completed the ordination examination by the Committee on the Ministry, the next step in the approval process is an Ecclesiastical Council (EC). An Ecclesiastical Council is a special meeting of the Association that is convened for the specific purpose of examining a candidate for Ordination or Privilege of Call.

The purpose of an EC is to provide an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate the ability to communicate a theological understanding of faith, his/her call, the purpose and mission of the church, and her/his gifts for ministry in ways that approximate the preaching, teaching, and pastoral care expectations of the ordained ministry.

This demonstration is to be prepared and presented by the MID in the following manner:

- Preparation of an Ordination Paper which will be made available to the EC delegates at a minimum of then (10) days prior to a convened EC. Delegates are encouraged to read the Ordination Paper in full prior to arriving to the EC.
- The MID will be introduced to the delegates of the EC by the Chair of Section A of the Church and Ministry Committee (or a designated proxy).
- The MID will offer a ten to twelve (10-12) minute oral presentation by the MID; the presentation may but does not require the inclusion of visual aids or handouts prepared by the MID.
- Following the presentation, a question and answer period of no more than forty-five (45) minutes will take place in which the candidate fields questions from the delegates of the EC.
 - The questions ought to be framed in such a way that the questions
 - Can be answered briefly;
 - Are directly related to the ministry for which the candidate is seeking a call;
 - Require the candidate to integrate various areas of ministry preparation—understanding of scripture, leadership, UCC polity, preaching, pastoral care, social justice, community building, etc.

Once the presentation and question and answer period of the EC is concluded, the MID and any and family members are excused. The moderator of the EC will then ask for a Motion to Authorize Ordination or Privilege of Call. The motion usually is to be made by the MID's Advisor or pastor and begins the process of deliberation leading to the vote by the EC.

Guidelines for deliberations are such that:

- Deliberations will be only on the motion.
- A motion can be amended by vote of the EC.
- If the motion does not pass, the EC can make additional motions, such as referring the MID to the Committee on Ministry for further discernment. In that case, the recording secretary ought to note concerns raised so they can be forwarded to Section A of the Church and Ministry Committee.
- All voting is confidential

- The actual vote count will be included in the record of the meeting.
- The presider calls for the vote when the time seems right or when there are calls for the previous question or a motion to proceed to vote.

Following the vote, the MID will be informed of the results of the vote in private regardless of the outcome. The decision of the EC will be delivered to the MID by a combination of the Moderator, Chair of Section A, the MID's advisor, and pastor (or designated proxies).

In the case of a vote of affirmation, the MID and any family members will be invited back into the room and may be welcomed with applause or singing, while the decision is announced publically.

If the decision is negative, the vote results ought to be presented in a manner sensitive to the feelings and dignity of the MID, along with any further directives decided by the EC. The MID will work with Section A as she/he continues the ordination journey.

Sample Questions:

- If you could preach only one sermon, what would be your text and main point?
- Speak with us about your relationship with Jesus Christ, who you think he was and who is he for you now in your life and ministry?
- How will you seek to balance the priestly, pastoral, and prophetic roles of the ministry?
- How do you see the role of the church today in the 21st Century?
- What do you see as the difference between ordained ministry and lay ministry?
- Talk with us how you nurture yourself through self-care, a prayer life, exercise, etc.?
- I do not belong to a church; give me a good reason why I should!
- What is it that you still wrestle with? And is there a blessing in that wrestling?
- Why do you love/hate/love-to-hate the UCC?
- What, in your opinion, are the challenges for the UCC in the 21st Century? What changes would you make if you had the ability to do so?
- What component of ministry are you most energized by? Which is your "growing edge"?
- What is your understanding of one of the following significant issues:
 - Evil
 - Communion
 - Baptism
 - Scriptural authority
 - Sin
 - Incarnation
 - Resurrection
 - Evangelism