

Writing Suggestions

Each exam (Theology, Worship and Sacraments, and Polity) is divided into three similarly structured sections.

- Section I of each exam contains one question and is open book. You will be able to use a *Book of Order* or *Book of Confessions* as appropriate. The book must be clean and unmarked for the Theology and Worship and Sacraments Exam. You may use an indexed *Book of Order* for the Polity Exam.
- Sections II and III: When you hand in Section I, you will be given Sections II and III. You will not be allowed to use a book for these sections. When you are given these sections, take time to look at all of the questions. Section II will have one question to answer, but Section III will have two questions from which you are to choose one to answer. After looking at all three questions, choose the one with which you are most comfortable to answer first. Answering the questions in this sequence accomplishes several goals: it helps with time management because you are not wasting time answering a question that is difficult for you; you have immediate success by first responding to a question that you can answer correctly; and you will be able to proceed to the more difficult question with confidence and time.

For each question:

- Read the question quickly for an overall idea.
- Reread the question slowly for a more detailed understanding.
- The third time you read the question, underline or number all of the parts that you should address in your answer.
- If the question contains one or more people to whom you are supposed to respond, look at the situation from each person's point of view--not just from you as the pastor. It is important to evaluate issues from different perspectives.
- Outline your response using the underlinings that you made on the third reading as a guide to your organization. Organize your response using the same structure as the question. Don't make the readers hunt for the answers.
- When you begin to write, use your outline as a guide. Organization is the key and the outline will provide this. It is better to write a short, direct, and well-organized essay than one that meanders around and never comes to a point.
- Never lose sight of the question being asked. How does every sentence and each paragraph relate to the question?
- Summarize your ideas in a short final paragraph. You can use phrases such as "in conclusion," "in response," "finally," or "in summary." A short conclusion gives the reader a sense of closure and gives you, the writer, an opportunity to demonstrate that you've answered the question completely.
- After you finish writing, reread your answer rechecking to make sure that you have completely answered the question and then correct any spelling or grammar mistakes. Just put a line through the mistake and rewrite the word above. If you see an area that you've left out, put a star where the information should go and then write that paragraph at the end of the test. Don't do this often because it makes the answer confusing to read. However, it is better to be a bit confusing than to not answer part of the question!
- Remember that these exams are testing "readiness for ministry." Try to show that readiness includes both extensive knowledge and competence in pastoral communication.
- Do not include any extraneous information. Just answer the question.

