

Dear Officers-Elect

Here's the scoop. The session is to examine you as to your preparedness in the areas of theology, history, polity. For ALL of these I will

- a) Describe your training
- b) speak to your attendance and diligence in preparing for class
- c) and make my recommendation that the session approve you as presented in these areas of your exam.

The LAST part is this. You are to (briefly) speak to your experience of God's grace in your life leading you to this call to be ordained/installed. *These should be short but authentic expressions of your faith journey and your sense of calling at this time to ordination/installation.* Below I will give a basic outline that has served many before you well. You do not have to use it but I encourage you to at least read through it as your prepare.

- 1) Think back over your life and ask God to help you see those places where the Spirit was at work leading you in faith. You may recall, for example, an important person who modeled the faith for you when you were a child / adult, OR maybe a time when you were particularly aware of God's presence with you (that night at Camp Tippy-Wakkann when the counselors took you out at night to sit beneath the stars and you marveled at God's majesty, OR that moment when your faith was strengthened and you began to live out your beliefs with new found resolve,) . . . You get the idea.
- 2) Choose from these things:
 - A person who has been important in your faith development
 - One time when you were touched by God's presence in a meaningful way
 - Some other event/place/person important to your life in faith.

Speak about each of these for 3 or 4 sentences - sharing why they seem important to you now. *Brevity is a blessing!*

- 3) The desire of this part of your examination is NOT for you to have the "right kind" of experiences. You will all be different! The desire is to have you reflect prayerfully on the path of life and faith which brings you to this moment of accepting the joys and responsibilities of ordination.

An example of a typical narrative might go like this:

I'm Paul and I first knew of God's love when I was 8 years old and asked God to be with me one night as I went to sleep. Something happened which I cannot explain but I was certain that my prayer was answered and my heart raced as I realized that faith was about a living God who answers prayer. I grew up in a typical Presbyterian home. We went to church regularly, just because you did that on Sunday, I guess. I remember sitting atop my grandmother's lap and being taught the shorter catechism when I was very young. I remember asking her how old she was and when she told me I got wide-eyed and asked her if she had "gone West in a covered wagon" - it became a family story.

In my college years I remained mostly faithful to weekly worship and was challenged and encouraged by the sermons of pastor George who seemed really good at saying things I felt were directed right at me. It was under his care that I eventually came to a fragile conviction that God was leading me to ordination. That conviction slowly grew until I was ordained 7 years later.

All my life my experience of God's grace has been most known through the constant care and love of my mother who - even now - serves as my role model in things of God. Her patience in suffering, her tenacity in caring, her liberality in sharing everything has been the means by which God molded my understanding of life and faith.

Now I stand at an important way-station in my journey of faith. I know that God has much yet to give me and teach me as I go. I am, of course, not fit to be ordained in one sense -- but by God's grace am made fit by the work of the Spirit which calls me to this Ministry. My talents, my time, and my heart I commit to God as I enter life ordained in God's church as a (ruling elder or deacon).

You will *want* to say *more than you need to*. It'll be hard maybe to choose which few things you want to share. Trust that God will guide you and know that those who receive your witness love you and are delighted by your story.