

THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

Guide for the Integrative Paper

WHAT IS AN INTEGRATIVE PAPER?

For many years now, those preparing for ordained ministry at The Presbyterian College, as well as students within the wider Montreal School of Theology, have been required to complete a significant project called the Integrative Paper. It consists of three major sections:

- I. My Journey of Faith
- II. My Understanding of what the Church Believes
- III. My Theology of Ministry

Although the length is not fixed, it is expected that you will devote at least 8-10 pages to each section. As with other papers you complete within the B.Th/M/Div. program, a thorough piece of work – carefully and concisely written – is expected.

WHY AN INTEGRATIVE PAPER?

The purpose of the Integrative Paper is to give you an opportunity (i) to think through and share your own journey of faith, (ii) to express your understanding of the faith convictions of the church, and (iii) to describe or define the theology of ministry that shapes who you are and what you will do in ministry.

In other words, the Integrative Paper will act as a major tool by which you can bring together your life, your faith, your theological understanding, your place in the church and your hopes for ministry, and then discover how they relate to one another. This will help you to assess the person you are and the ministry you would offer in service to Christ, the community of his people, and the mission that defines the church. It will also help in the formation of the habit of thinking theologically about your life, your faith commitments and your ministry.

TIMELINE

The Integrative Paper is not like a regular academic assignment, which is submitted and graded at one particular moment; not is it a primarily intellectual exercise. Rather, it is about **your** life, **your** experiences, **your** learning, **your** growth and **your** theology. This means that preparation for this assignment is going on throughout your years at the College. The following schedule will apply:

- 1) The first section of the paper (**My Journey of Faith**) is to be submitted to the Director of Pastoral Studies for review and discussion, prior to entry into B.Th.3/M.Div.2. With this section, as with any of the three sections, you may be asked to rethink some part of the paper and/or to revise and rewrite.

- 2) The second section of the paper (**My Understanding of what the Church believes**) will be submitted to the Director of Pastoral Studies prior to entering the In-Ministry Year. In the course of the IMY, this section will be revised and resubmitted, in light of the Reformed Confessions courses and others.
- 3) The third and final section of the Integrative Paper will be written during the In-Ministry Year and one section of it will be presented to fellow students, and to the three Directors of Pastoral Studies, toward the end of the second term – within the Theology of Ministry Class.

Since the Integrative Paper is a requirement for the M.Div. and the Diploma in Ministry, and must be completed before graduation, you are strongly advised to keep to this schedule.

Integrative Paper Section 1: Your Journey of Faith

This section is autobiographical. It is intended to be a descriptive and reflective statement on how you have arrived at this point of life's journey. That is, ask the question of how your relationship with God in Christ, and your understanding of your faith, together with your own decisions, have led to this moment of preparation for ministry.

Follow your own chronology – significant experiences, particular people, turning points, major –and speak in your language and voice. Be as concrete and precise as possible. You are not being asked here to use technical, theological terms unless such terms are meaningful and helpful in describing your understanding and experiences. Note that this section of the paper is also normally required by your Presbytery as part of your examination as a candidate for ordination. As already mentioned, this section can and should be revised at various stages along the path of discernment for ministry.

Integrative Paper II: What the Church Believes

In this section, you will state your understanding of the Church's teaching and faith. This is your opportunity to provide a basic theological framework for how you understand the Christian faith. What is being asked is **not** a list of answers given to the questions below, but your paper should address such questions as:

What do you understand the church to be? How is the church to be distinguished or set apart, if at all, within the wider community/world?

What is the gospel that should be preached, taught, and celebrated in the church? How is Jesus Christ good news for the world?

What is your understanding of God, of Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit? Of sin, injustice, judgment, forgiveness, grace, healing, mission, evangelism?

What does it mean for the Church to be a confessional Church? What are the strengths of the Reformed tradition? What aspects do you readily receive or resist?

At what points do you see the Church living out the Gospel? Are there areas where the Church contradicts your understanding of the Gospel?

Integrative Paper III: Theology of Ministry

Introduction: What do we mean by *integration*?

Integration is a difficult concept to define. However, it is necessary for thinking about our life and our faith. The word *integrity* suggests “the quality of being complete undivided, or unified.” Integration implies that your faith, life, and person fit together in a way that is complete and coherent. Achieving integration as a person is never fully accomplished. But those training for ministry should be able to describe their ministry as a coherent, integrated whole.

What are the pieces we are seeking to “fit” together? In ministry, we seek a fit between our theological convictions, our understanding of Scripture, our call to ministry, our gifting in the Spirit, and our actions and life in ministry. Integration means that our convictions and beliefs and actions hold together in a meaningful way. There is an absence of dissonance or conflict between our thinking about God and actions in service to the way of Christ.

Integrative Paper III has four tasks. Each task will help you articulate who you are in ministry and what you believe about ministry. As you write each section, you will draw together different elements of your faith and understanding, and apply that to different contexts and situations. This will end up being one integrative paper (in four parts) whose form, tone, and substance will be such that they hold together meaningfully as one project with the overarching theme of a theology of ministry.

Each task asks you to write to a different presumed audience. You will not write about your theology of ministry in the here-and-now, not in the abstract. By writing for a particular person, place or context, you will show how your theology of ministry is enacted in real life. For each task, be aware of the audience. Write directly and use language that will be accessible and meaningful to that audience. If it helps, imagine a backstory or life situation.

Send each task to your Director of Studies by the due date indicated below. Attach the document to an email. Use normal style for citing sources as appropriate. Each task should be between 1200 and 1500 words.

Task 1. Write a statement to a congregation board or council about your ministry

Length: 1200-1500 words

Imagine that you have been asked to write a statement about your vision of ministry for a ministry board (or session, parish council) where you are seeking to serve in ministry.

This board is has a diverse membership (different ages, cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences). Not all members of the board are familiar with theological or church language.

Write a statement to the board to describe your ministry. Use language that different members of the board will understand and relate to. Including such things as

- How you came to be in ministry
- What is important to you in your ministry (or your purpose and vision for your ministry, how your ministry connects to your faith and to the Bible)
- Your style of ministry leadership
- What are your strengths or gifts and what you see as challenges or areas of growth.

Task 2: Write a script of a conversation between yourself and a non-Christian or someone new to Christianity about your ministry

Length: 4-5 pages, double-spaced

Imagine having a conversation with someone in your neighbourhood who is either not a Christian or who is new to Christianity. Imagine that you met this person through a community project or program; you don't know them very well but you have met several times. The person has just learned that you are a minister (or pastor, priest). They have lots of questions such as

- Why did you want to be a minister?
- What *is* a minister?
- What do ministers do?
- What do you believe about Jesus and the Bible?
- What do you think about other religions?

Write out the conversation that you might have with this person. Talk about your ministry and what it means to you. In your conversation, tell them about a New Testament passage, person, or story inspires you as a disciple of Jesus. Speak conversationally, using every-day language; remember you are explaining this to someone who is not familiar with theological language, the church, or the Bible.

Write this conversation as though it is a script in a play. For example,

Abdel: I just heard that you are a minister. That really surprised me.

You: Yes, it does surprise some people I guess. When I told my friends that I was...

Abdel: That's interesting. Did you ever feel like ...

You: ... Yes, I think so. But for me it is also about...

Abdel: For me personally, it's hard to imagine ... I wonder sometimes if

Task 3: Write a letter to a modern theologian about how this person's theology has influenced your ministry

Length: 4-5 pages, double-spaced

Write a letter to a well-known, modern, academic theologian, whose work you have studied during your recent theological studies. In your letter

- Describe two or three theological insights from their work that are most significant or influential for you. Use your own words (don't just quote) and describe how you interpret or understand each idea.
- Explain how this person's theology has influenced your understanding of your ministry. In other words, how does this theological understanding change the way you think about your ministry, the way you live out your ministry, and the way you describe your ministry to others.

Modern means someone who has published later than 1850.

Academic means that this is not a popular writer but someone whose work has been on a syllabus for a B.Th. course or equivalent (E.g. Douglas Hall, Hyun Kyung Chung, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann. But **not** C.S. Lewis or Dietrich Bonhoeffer.) Please confirm your choice of theologian with your director of studies before beginning this assignment.

Task 4: Describe how people are formed in faith, through participation in Christian faith communities and your role of the minister to support faith formation

Length: 4-5 pages, double-spaced

First, describe the ways *you* have been formed by your experiences in the church to become the person/minister that you are now. Focus on your experiences *within faith communities*, including activities, people you encountered, liturgies and other faith practices.

Second, create three imaginary characters—three people who have different backgrounds, ages, and life experiences. The characters may be based on people you know. If so, change details so that they are not recognizable. Describe each character (about one paragraph per person) including such things as context, personality, and background information. For each person, describe an ideal process of formation in faith community. Describe events, mentorship, support, community experiences, congregational and community practices, liturgy, missional connections, engagement with others etc. that might support or engage this person where they are now but also help them to grow in faith and discipleship.

Third, describe the overall role of you would seek to embody as minister, priest or pastor in helping faith formation to happen within a faith community.

Presentations to your field placement group

Each person will present two of their task to their field placement group, one at the end of the Fall semester and one at the end of the Winter semester. There will be opportunities for others to ask questions, comment on key ideas, and give feedback.

Rubrics for grading this assignment

Assignments that do not meet requirements for Pass will be sent back for revision.