

GENERAL ORDINATION EXAMINATION 1972

Part I: Authorities

This part of the Examination seeks to test your awareness of and your manner of using the Biblical, historical and theological authorities which provide the governing norms of the church's life and ministry. In the 48 hours provided, please answer two of the three questions (1, 2 and 3 A or B). Use not more than 2,000 words for each answer — fewer if possible. Don't sign your name on the answers — use your registration number only.



Candidate's
registration
number

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A member of your vestry comes to you in some considerable distress. His wife has had a long and growing interest in astrology that he has regarded with a mixture of bemusement and embarrassment. Recently, however, her interest has taken an intense turn and become an upsetting matter in their family. Their son is now engaged to be married but his mother has taken a firm and absolute stand against the marriage on the grounds that the prospective couple were born under "conflicting signs" and the union promises, therefore, nothing but conflict and impermanence.

What are the issues involved in this matter ?

Does the Christian faith promise anything comparable to the sense of certainty found by this woman in astrology ? If so, what ?

What authorities would you use in responding to this situation ?

You have appointed a Worship Committee to advise you about the introduction and use of the Services for Trial Use in the regular worship of the congregation. As their own study progresses they become increasingly troubled about apparent changes of doctrine that accompany the proposed changes of liturgy.

Questions such as the following have been raised in their minds. For example, the Book of Common Prayer has provided a uniform source and basis for the teachings of the Episcopal Church. How can we determine what the doctrine of our Church is when two or more services for the same occasion have equal authority? Again they find themselves asking what the point is of the addition (in the Second Service) to the prayer of consecration where the people say in unison, "Christ will come again". This idea seems to make no sense to modern man. Why should it be emphasized in a contemporary service?

Identify and discuss the considerations in the church's teaching which would inform your discussions with them.

What, if anything, does the phrase "Christ will come again" mean to you?

(Choose either A or B)

A. You are the curate of a suburban church. In your ministry to the community you have become involved in several important political issues. A group of respected civic leaders within the congregation come to you and state their opinion that you have much to offer politically. They ask you to run for a seat in the state legislature at the next election, which promises to be a heated political contest.

Write an article for publication in either "The Living Church" or "The Episcopalian" explaining your reasons for (a) saying "no" or (b) saying "yes".

In either case undergird your position with the material governing your understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world, between the Gospel and society.

B. At the annual meeting of your parish, a group of parishioners, active in both the parish and the community, present three motions for discussion and action:

(1) that the parish sponsor a weekly study group for exploration of questions concerning the role and rights of women in the community and the church.

(2) that the parish publicly endorse and actively lobby for passage of a controversial resolution before the School Board which would require that within five years 50% of the school principals in the community shall be women (only 10% are at present).

(3) that the parish declare publicly and to the bishop that it believes women are entitled to full equality in all aspects of the life and ministry of the church.

What position would you take on each of the three issues ?

Would you urge the parish to take these positions ?

What is your understanding of the nature of the church which leads you to these conclusions ? (Refer explicitly to the sources of authority you use in reaching this understanding.)

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Part II: Communication

This part of the Examination is focussed on the ways you might seek to express and communicate the Christian gospel in effective, contemporary form, and grapple with the issues clergymen encounter. As before, you are asked to answer two of the three questions (1, 2 and 3 A or B) in the 48 hours you have. Use not more than 2,000 words for each answer — fewer if possible. Remember not to sign the paper — simply use the registration number.



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The Church School teachers come to you asking for assistance. They explain that in their work they are having great difficulty explaining the meaning of "Our Father", "Our Heavenly Father", and similar expressions embodying the image of the Fatherhood of God. They have concluded that many of the children have generally rejected the father-figure because they regard their own fathers as ineffectual, repressive or indifferent. Some of these students are indeed members of fatherless families because of death, divorce or desertion. The result, the teachers feel, is a rejection of the thought of a loving, understanding, compassionate God as unreal. The teachers urge you to rescue them by meeting with a group of Church School students to explain and discuss with them the true meaning of the Fatherhood of God in a way that will communicate the substance of the phrase positively.

Outline your response to the teachers.

How would you plan to deal with the students' problem ?

Your bishop has authorized the admission to Holy Communion of baptized, but as-yet-unconfirmed children at the age of six. Some parents in your parish wish their baptized children to be permitted to receive Holy Communion at an earlier age than six; others do not wish their children to become communicants until after they are confirmed.

What would be your plan and strategy for Christian Education in the parish for the coming year that would illuminate the theological issues and deal pastorally with this matter ?

(Choose either A or B)

A. "The entertainment milieu has transformed the ways in which we believe and are capable of believing. An absolute kind of belief, as well as belief in absolutes, becomes increasingly difficult as the entertainment milieu trains people to believe tentatively and with elasticity . . . The very concept of faith -- to believe in that which you cannot see and cannot understand -- comes with difficulty to a generation which has depended, as perhaps no generation before, on its senses." (W. Kuhns, The Electronic Gospel)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this analysis ? Explain.

How might your conclusions affect one's expectations or success with traditional methods of preaching and evangelism ?

Father Avery Dulles, S.J., suggests that people may be more open today to the means of communication used by Jesus himself. "The new electronic media are no more hostile to the gospel than were the vehicles of manuscript and print. Jesus himself . . . did not use writing at all (and his use of speech was quite different from the methods of kerygmatic proclamation). He taught by

exemplary actions, stories, parables, and pithy aphorisms. He preferred to ask questions rather than to answer them; he avoided abstract terminology and rigorous logical demonstration. By appealing to the imagination and feelings of his hearers he elicited a high degree of audience participation. In the language of McLuhan, we may say that Jesus used 'cool' rather than 'hot' media of communications."

How might this affect our traditional methods and understanding of a ministry of Word and Sacrament ?

B. You have been recently instituted as vicar of a new, vigorous mission in a suburban area. The congregation is on the young side, families with young children, junior executives, teachers, foremen, salesmen. As you have been warned, the congregation is under a great deal of tension about "pentecostalism". In the community a strong but informal group, including people from most of the churches and also non-churchgoers, has been meeting once or twice a week in one another's homes, praying and studying the Bible together and celebrating the "baptism of the Spirit".

Influenced by this group, a women's prayer-fellowship in your congregation has split because nearly half its members have been speaking with tongues. Two or three within the Bishop's Committee have begun questioning the adequacy of the traditional sacrament of water Baptism alone.

You have talked this all over with the bishop and he has recommended that you lead, during Epiphany, a School of Prayer for the congregation, one night a week for four weeks.

What themes would you cover ?

How would you develop your thoughts ?

What would you expect from those attending the classes ?

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Part III: Pastoral Ministry

The final part of the Examination is designed to measure your pastoral style and patterns of response, not experience, in three quite different situations. Please answer all three questions in this part, each one with 2,000 words or less. Use the registration number only, not your name.



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You hear that an older priest, a friend for many years who had exercised considerable influence in your vocational decision, has become employed in a secular position. You notice his absence from your ordination. Your telephone inquiry is a candid conversation but does not mention any personal matters. Finally you are invited to lunch with him.

He explains that he feels sick at heart, a classic case of what seminary taught you to call existential doubt: "I can't conjure up the belief any more". He describes how his problem had reached a climax in a seminar he was invited to lead at the local college. It was to be a "relevant" investigation of Biblical theism, but he found that he could not get the students to focus seriously on the topic. He recalled that his discussion of the problem of evil, concluding with the statement, "If God is good then He is not God" produced vacant stares. They were not concerned with God, much less with problems in believing in him. His own theistic concepts then became vacant to him. He tried to deny it, but he finally found himself agreeing with the students, though he did not voice the fact. He said it was the first time he had been honest with himself in years. The only thing to do was to seek secular work. But despair followed.

It seems clear to you that his despair is very deep -- perhaps even suicidal -- and that he is turning to you as to a younger friend whose fresh training and familiarity with some of the modern theological approaches possibly could help him. He asks you to respond to his doubts.

What do you say to him in expressing your personal understanding of God ?

You are a curate in a large downtown parish. The rector is a good supervisor and genuinely supportive but has a way of giving you your head which sometimes seems to place unfair responsibility on you; yet you admire him and enjoy working with him. The vestrymen are largely on the conservative side and generally prefer more conventional types of ministry. Yet they are men of considerable experience and competence; they like the rector and yourself; and they have been willing to support new ventures even with a somewhat skeptical mind.

In this instance the rector has assigned you (with your encouragement) to an ecumenical coffee-house ministry sponsored by the parish and six other nearby churches. The coffee-house has evoked sharp criticism from the community because drugs have been used there, the clientele are vigorously anti-establishment, and they are highly critical of the generally-accepted cultural values of the parish.

Several vestrymen feel strongly that parish support and sponsorship of this coffee-house must be ended. You feel strongly that in spite of the weakness and obvious difficulties in the program, the coffee-house represents a needed, important and effective ministry, ecumenically supported. The rector asks you to prepare a one-page summary statement supporting your case, for circulation at the meeting, and to take ten minutes of the meeting time to expand or interpret your views before the vote on the coffee-house's continuing existence is taken.

How do you analyze the factors involved ?

What are the conflicting responsibilities involved here ?

What help would you seek to support your position ?

How do you intend to present your case ?

You are on the staff of a parish of 1200 communicants, in a city of 250,000, located on the edge of the multi-racial inner city and near the campus of a state university. It is a relatively old parish with a core of faithful communicants, members of families long identified with the parish, who now reside in the suburbs. Their attendance at church services is intermittent, but their financial support is substantial. The more active communicants are predominantly young married people, largely junior professionals in the middle income range. This group is also multi-racial; about two-thirds are white, a fifth are black, and the rest are Oriental in racial background. University students also attend services regularly. Most of them are not from Episcopalian families; they are frankly explorers.

The parish has a good tradition of forceful and effective preaching. Music is important. The services are frequently sung; the congregation enjoys singing familiar hymns. There are six licensed lay readers, two of whom are also licensed to administer the chalice and often do so. The Church School has an enrollment of about 275 children. Ethnically, the enrollment is roughly half black, 40% white and 10% Oriental. The teachers represent the same ethnic distribution. Because of the contributions of the suburban families and a modest endowment the parish is in sound financial condition. The composition of the 14-man vestry is approximately one-third from the suburban families, and two-thirds from the group of more active communicants, including two black members.

The rector has been there for twenty years. Because of his long familiarity with the parish and its people he is able to handle most problem-situations informally with great personal skill. He has been assisted by a series of curates, each generally staying for two years. In addition to the curate, you have been serving the parish for thirteen months as a part-time instructor in the English Department at the university. Your income is almost equally divided between the two employers.

In your work among students you are aware of how easily turned off they are by ordinary parish life and worship. You also sense a high degree of hostility towards the student community by many members of the congregation.

The rector has been given a present of a three-month trip around the world, and the new curate has not yet come, so you are alone and you have been named priest in charge.

Plan the entire principal service for one of these four days:

- a. the Sunday nearest Election Day
- b. Every Member Canvass Sunday
- c. Thanksgiving Day
- d. the Sunday following the funeral of the most prominent member of the congregation or of four children killed in an accident.

You will officiate, preach and be in charge of any special activities on the day you choose. The propers for Year A (P.B. Studies 19) are to be used. According to diocesan policy, the trial rites are frequently used, at your discretion, as are alternative translations of the Bible.

First, prepare the Sunday bulletin with an outline of the principal service, giving your choice of hymns, chants, liturgical texts, etc., with enough commentary to explain your choice in each case. Prepare also suitable introductions to any special ceremonies or activities you think appropriate and desirable.

Second, prepare a full precis of your sermon (1½-2 pages long), with a summary of its development, the illustrations you will use (if any), and some key sentences.