

## The Middler Review Vocational/Theological Statement *Theologically and Spiritually Rooted Leadership for Social Transformation*

The Middler Vocational/Theological Essay offers an opportunity for students to reflect critically and constructively on their progress to date in the M.Div. program, demonstrate their integration of scholarly theological disciplines with communal spiritual practices, and articulate a vision of transformative leadership.

The 15-20 page essay, prepared in consultation with the student's advisor well in advance of the Review, is shared with the Review panelists and provides a foundation for the Review itself. The essay should reflect the student's engagement with the learning outcomes of the M.Div. program in relation to the student's particular vocational goals, giving due attention to each of the following prompts:

1. How do sacred texts, theological traditions, and their varying interpretations shape the practice of ministry (in relation to, for example, preaching, worship, pastoral care, education, and community organizing)? How has your engagement with these texts and traditions shaped your own theological convictions (concerning, for example, God, Christ, sin, salvation, ecclesiology, sacramental practice, the issues involved in theodicy, such as suffering and evil, and other similar matters)? In what ways do you envision constructing and advancing theological work in your own religious/spiritual tradition?
2. Describe and articulate your own social location (with respect to race, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, gender, class, etc.) and how these contextual factors shape the development of theological ideas and spiritual practices. What kind of strategies are the most effective for engaging with contexts that are different from your own and for the sake of social and economic justice?
3. How are the spiritual practices that you have developed and are developing crucial for a leadership style marked by social justice, personal integrity, cultural humility, shared accountability, and a sustainable vision for a world where all can thrive and flourish?
4. Where would you locate the best partnerships (with individuals, groups, and organizations) for informing and enhancing the work you hope to undertake in the world? Indicate why such collaborative efforts are vital for constructive theological work and effective ministry.
5. Identify at least three "growing edges" moving forward in your process of integrating the intellectual disciplines of theological education with the practice of ministry for the sake of organizing and nurturing communities of social transformation.

While students are not expected to address these prompts definitively (much less comprehensively) in an essay of this length, the responses will provide important material to help the Review panelists to: assess with the student particular areas of academic strength and limitation; refine and hone the student's vocational aspirations and professional goals; and discern together how best to utilize the time remaining in the student's program.

Students are strongly encouraged to submit a draft of the Vocational Essay to their advisor at least one month before Review materials are due to the Review panelists. This will provide an opportunity for the student and the advisor to discuss the draft, consider revisions, and anticipate key areas for conversation and mutual discernment during the Review.