

Welcome Letter and Pre-Registration Form

Every Christian disciple has a ministry, and all who are called to ministry should be held accountable. Ministerial credentialing, however, relates to particular vocational calls and carries with it both recognition and accountability. Credentials are covenantal in nature; to accept such credentials is to become accountable to the established credentialing body of the appropriate area assembly. While most ministries reserved for the laity of the church do not require formal recognition as a means of establishing accountability, ministries practiced by clergy persons usually do.

Credentialing in the Church of God movement may take the form of ordination, licensing, or commissioning. Each requires that certain qualifications be met for ministry requirements and accountability. It is the responsibility of the appropriate credentialing body to determine whether or not a minister is qualified for credentialing, and, if so, when and at what level.

Evidence of certain spiritual prerequisites may be required by a credentialing committee in order for a prospective ministerial candidate to initiate pursuit of appropriate credentials. Such prerequisites include, but are not limited to:

1. Salvation—as evidenced by a holy lifestyle;
2. Evidence of the call of God—a divine appointment to Christian ministry;
3. A demonstrated need for vocational credentials;
4. Fellowship and involvement in a local congregation of the Church of God movement;
5. *Demonstrated knowledge and understanding determined through use of the Bible Content Discovery Survey*

Because there are varieties of ministry, there are varieties of credentialing. Those who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned receive such credentialing because they have been “set apart” for a ministry that requires a more extensive involvement and a special gifting by the Holy Spirit.

Credentialing at whatever level signifies a covenant relationship between the minister and the credentialing body, the minister and ministerial peers, the minister and the church at large, the minister and the local church being served, and the minister and God. Assuring the integrity of each of these covenant relationships rests on patterns of mutual accountability.

The Three Levels of Credentialing for Vocational Ministers

Commissioning

The purpose of commissioning is to recognize and support one who articulates a sense of call to ministry. It grants a preliminary ministerial status and inclusion on the approved list.

Credentialing bodies may commission a person for terms of one or two years, at their discretion, depending on circumstances and qualifications. Terms are renewable as the credentialing committee may judge appropriate.

A commission is given on the condition of an annual review by the credentialing body. It may be voided by action of the credentialing body if deemed advisable. It may be renewed so long as the credentialing body judges the minister worthy of such continuing credentialing. Being commissioned does not necessarily imply that the minister eventually will be licensed and/or ordained. When judged appropriate by the credentialing committee, a candidate may be licensed without having first been commissioned.

Licensing

Licensing is a second level of credentialing, one that acknowledges a minister's call to the Christian ministry and a corresponding commitment to vocational involvement. Licensing affords a limited measure of recognition and accountability. While it may serve as a step toward ordination, licensing should not be viewed as the promise of ordination. Licensing often satisfies legal requirements, as well as requirements imposed by such institutions as hospitals, nursing homes, and jails when these provide opportunities for pastoral care.

Credentialing bodies may license ministers for terms of one or two years, at their discretion, depending on circumstances and the qualifications of the minister. A license is given on the condition of an annual review by the credentialing body. It may be voided by action of the credentialing body if deemed advisable. It may be renewed if the credentialing body judges the minister worthy of such continuing credentialing.

Ordination

Ordination, the final step of vocational credentialing, recognizes a minister's call and vocational commitment to the Christian ministry. It provides for accountability to the appropriate credentialing body and also satisfies certain legal requirements of the state or province. Ordination usually is needed by persons who serve as leaders of local congregations, in institutional ministries, missionary endeavors, and certain other formal capacities. Ordination is to be granted only when it is strategic to the performance of vocational ministry to which one is called, and when its recipient is found suitable for ordination by virtue of divine call, appropriate character, spirit, commitment, preparation, beliefs, and performance.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CREDENTIALING VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTERS:

Credentialing vocational Christian ministers occurs at three levels. Such credentialing must always rest on the condition that certain personal and professional expectations have been met. Indiscriminate credentialing practices only bring reproach on the ministry and harm to the church. The credentialing body, therefore, must be aware of the essential qualifications that give evidence of a person's fitness for Christian ministry, and know how to determine that a candidate possesses these qualifications.

The crucial qualifications for vocational ministry are divided into six categories. No one of these should be considered less essential than another. To be unqualified in even one area is to be unqualified for the ministry and hence, for vocational credentialing.

- 1. The Motivational Qualification** – Credentialing is for those who are inwardly convinced that God has singled them out for vocational Christian ministry.
- 2. The Moral and Ethical Qualification** – Credentialing is for those whose character and reputation are worthy of Christian ministers.
- 3. The Theological and Biblical Qualification** – Credentialing is for those who possess a well-developed and scripturally valid belief system and whose lives give indication of the assimilation of that belief system.
- 4. The Dispositional and Relational Qualification** – Credentialing is for those whose personal disposition is consistently in keeping with that expected of a representative of Jesus Christ and the Church.
- 5. The Educational Qualification** – Credentialing is for those who are committed to adequate education for the ministerial profession.
- 6. The Vocational Qualification** – Credentialing is for those who are peers in position and performance of those who are vocationally or bi-vocationally engaged in the professional Christian ministry.

Categories of Vocational Ministers

The following identifies the ministerial categories of those vocational ministers who may be credentialed through commissioning, licensing, and/or ordination.

Pastors

Persons who pastor recognized Church of God congregations may be properly considered for ordination, provided they have made a long-term vocational commitment to Christian ministry with the Church of God movement and otherwise meet the qualifications for ordination listed in section 2.00 of the 2011 *Credentials Manual*.

Staff Associates

Career staff associates (e.g., those engaged in music and worship ministry, youth ministry, Christian education ministry) who have made long-term vocational commitments to congregational Christian ministry, and who have achieved professional competence, may be appropriately considered for ordination. In such instances, steps toward ordination should be no different from those prescribed for senior pastors.

Organizational Staff

Professional persons who have made a long-term vocational commitment to Christian ministry and who serve as evangelists or in administrative, educational, para-church, or institutional capacities that support the work of a local congregation may be appropriately considered for ordination. In such instances, steps toward ordination should be no different from those prescribed for senior pastors.

Chaplains

Persons who represent the church at large as military or institutional chaplains often find that ordination is a prerequisite for employment and placement. Those who have made long-term vocational commitments to these and similar callings may be appropriately considered for ordination. In such instances, steps toward ordination should be no different from those prescribed for senior pastors.

Christian Counselors

Professional counselors who have made a long-term vocational commitment to Christian ministry, and who have become properly educated for service as Christian counselors, may be appropriately considered for ordination. In such instances, steps toward ordination should be no different from those prescribed for senior pastors.

Missionaries

Persons may be considered for ordination if they represent the church at large as formally appointed missionaries through Global Missions of Church of God Ministries and have a long-term vocational commitment to Christian ministry. In such instances, steps toward ordination should be no different from those prescribed for senior pastors.

Note: It is understood that credentialing assemblies may license or commission any of the above persons. In some cases, only a commission or license may be given. It should not be assumed that issuance of a commission or license assures eventual ordination. Circumstances may make licensing more appropriate than ordination. Licensing may be considered the best option when the minister deserves recognition other than commissioning, but does not meet all the requirements for ordination as listed in section 3.00 of the 2011 *Credentials Manual*.

Note: Students. Although students who are preparing for ministry cannot be credentialed, it is important that, during their junior and senior years of college, they begin to connect with a local credentialing assembly and, if so desired, begin the process. This important relational and ministry connection will help them when they enter ministry. It is important that, as this process begins, the ministerial student has the endorsement of the home church's pastor.

What to Expect Of This Credentialing Process

This credentialing process is designed to last three years, broken into six six-month modules, each focusing on a core area of ministry and leadership development.

You will begin in the Commencement module, where you will be introduced to your first cluster, a group of candidates who will journey with you. Our hope is that this cluster will provide community, relationships, and support as you continue in your growth and development.

Each module will be hosted by a coach, who will lead you through guided webex training calls, designed to be an interactive teaching platform and allow for dynamic question and answer sessions.

You will be expected to participate in each call. You will also be expected to fulfill each module's unique requirements, including reading assignments, responses to video resources, and additional evaluations designed to:

- Give your coach and credentials committee an accurate picture of where you are in your ministry.
- Give you a saved history at the end of your credentialing process from which you can view your own spiritual and ministerial growth, as well as apply what you have taken from each module as you write your final Life and Ministry Plan.

The next five modules will focus on, in order:

Competencies, Character, Confessions, Connectivity, Celebrations, and Coaching

You will be expected to meet with your State's Credentials Committee at least annually to continue your progress towards credentialing.

Each Module has a fee associated with it that will cover coaching fees, the development of our unique resources, on-line hosting, and administrative costs. Each module must be paid for before you can be assigned to a cluster. The fee schedule is below:

Module One: \$250 (Additional Assessment Costs in this module, as well as background check costs are what make this module unique in price.)

Module Two through Module Six: \$125 – over the course of 2 ½ years = \$625

Return this form to Indiana Ministries:

I attest that I meet the qualifications for a credentials application, and have read the above regarding what to expect of this process.

Pre-Registration Form for Pursuing Credentials in the Church of God

Personal Information

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____ Birthdate: _____

Are you a U.S. Citizen? _____ Birth place: _____

Are you a military veteran? _____ What branch? _____

Have you ever applied for ministerial credentials with the Church of God before?

No Yes

If yes, what was the outcome?

Do you currently hold ministerial credentials with any other religious affiliation?

No Yes

If yes, with which affiliation?

Ministerial Service:

Church/organization currently serving _____ City _____

Position _____ # years in this position _____

In what specific interchurch work have you been active?

Credentials Justification:

1. How does the ministry you are currently performing require formal recognition and ministry credentials?
2. What ministry are you currently doing or anticipate doing that you could not do without credentials?
3. Please explain the reason(s) you want formal recognition in the *Church of God*?
4. Are you familiar with the doctrinal teachings that have been historically held by the Reformation Movement of the *Church of God*? At what points do your beliefs differ from those teachings?

Return to: Indiana Ministries via Jenene Lighty: jlighy@indianaministries.org

After review of this document you will receive an application and further instructions via email.