

Ministerial Credential Requirements and Information

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The following information is excerpted from the Southern California District Council of the Assemblies of God Bylaws regarding the requirements for ministerial credentials. **PLEASE READ CAREFULLY.**

THE MINISTRY DESCRIBED

Christ's gifts to the Church include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11), exhorters, administrators, leaders, and helpers (Romans 12:7,8). In terms of maturity of ministry, three classifications of ministry are recognized: the ordained minister, the licensed minister, and the certified minister. Ministers holding certificates of ordination, license to preach, specialized ministries licenses, and certificates of ministry are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church.

Applicants for ministerial recognition shall obtain application forms from the District Secretary which shall be sent upon receipt of an Application Materials Fee. All completed applications for certified minister, licensed minister, ordained minister and reinstatement, shall be accompanied by a processing fee, which is not refundable.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

The following qualifications pertain to all applicants for ministerial recognition:

Salvation. Testimony to having experienced the new birth (John 3:5).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Testimony to having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues according to Acts 2:4. The Spirit-filled life will enable him to fulfill the threefold mission of the church (Preamble to these bylaws).

Evidence of call. Clear evidence of a divine call to the ministry, evidenced by a personal conviction, confirmed by the work of the Spirit and the testimony of fellow ministers.

Christian character. A blameless Christian life and a good report of those who are without (Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:7).

Doctrinal position. A thorough understanding of and agreement with our doctrinal position as contained in the Statement of Fundamental Truths.

Assemblies of God polity. A satisfactory working knowledge of the principles, practices, and purposes of the Fellowship through a study of the General Council and District Council Constitution and Bylaws.

Commitment to the Fellowship. An active loyalty to our General Council and District Council constitutional and bylaw agreements, a cooperative spirit, and a readiness to seek and receive the counsel of older brethren and those in positions of authority.

Basic educational requirements. Any level of formal academic achievement (diploma or degree) shall not be a requirement for credentials; however, credential applicants shall meet the following criteria:

- (1) All applicants are required to be interviewed by the District Credentials Committee and, in preparation for the interview, pass a standard exam approved by the General Presbytery whereby they demonstrate knowledge of the Bible, Assemblies of God doctrines, and ministerial practices; and either
- (2) Successfully complete equivalent training to that indicated in paragraph (3) below, preferably, in an endorsed Assemblies of God postsecondary school; or in a seminary, college, Bible college, or school approved by the District Credentials Committee consistent with criteria established by the General Council Credentials Committee; or
- (3) Successfully complete courses, prescribed by the General Presbytery, offered in correspondence through the Berean College of the Assemblies of God.

Marital status. We disapprove of any married persons holding ministerial credentials with the Southern California District Council if either marriage partner has a former companion living, except as hereinafter provided.

Annulments and marriage dissolutions. The Executive Presbytery of the General Council shall have the authority to determine whether an applicant's annulment of a former marriage is consistent with the scriptural position of the Fellowship related to the granting or holding of ministerial credentials; or, in the case of a divorce or a dissolution whether the circumstances would more appropriately be classified as calling for an annulment. The application must be accompanied by clear and satisfactory evidence of an illegal marriage through deception or fraud. Appeals from the decisions of the Executive Presbytery may be made to the General Presbytery of the General Council.

Eligibility of women. The Scriptures plainly teach that divinely called and qualified women may also serve the church in the ministry of the Word (Joel 2:29; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Women who have developed in the ministry of the Word so that their ministry is acceptable generally, and who have proved their qualifications in actual service, and who have met all the requirements of the Credentials Committee of this District Council, are entitled to whatever grade of credentials their qualifications warrant and the right to administer the ordinances of the church when such acts are necessary.

Ministers from other organizations. If a minister from another reputable body desires to affiliate with the Assemblies of God, the credentials committees of both the General Council and the District Council are under no obligation to accept the applicant's previous ministerial status, but will judge each candidate on his or her own merits as to the level of credentials to be granted. Such applicants shall be required to:

- (1) Conform to Assemblies of God criteria for recognition.
- (2) Complete an application for ministerial recognition.
- (3) Submit a recommendation for ministerial recognition.
- (4) Submit a recommendation from the body with which formerly affiliated. If such is not available, letters of recommendation from three reputable ordained ministers who are familiar with the applicant's ministry.
- (5) Take the credential examination.
- (6) Meet with the District Council Credentials Committee.
- (7) Be recommended by the District Council Credentials Committee for the approval of the General Council Credentials Committee.
- (8) All previously ordained ministers so approved shall receive recognition as an ordained Assemblies of God minister with the laying on of hands by the District Presbytery.
- (9) Ministers who receive Assemblies of God recognition will relinquish their ministerial credentials with any other organization.

Citizenship. Must either be a citizen of the United States or have a permanent residence status. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the District Council Credentials Committee.

Assemblies of God involvement and residence within District. To obtain a ministerial credential, a person shall indicate that they have been attending and are supporting with their tithes and offerings an Assemblies of God church on a regular basis for a minimum of six months and shall have been a resident within the District for a minimum of one year immediately prior to submitting their application for credentials. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the District Council Credentials Committee.

SPECIFIC QUALIFICATIONS

Residency requirements of applicants. Applicants for all credentials must be residents of or hold credentials in the Southern California District and appear before the District Council Credentials Committee.

Certified Minister.

- (1) General requirements. They shall show promise of usefulness in the gospel work. They shall devote a part of their time to Christian ministry and, at the discretion of the District Credentials Committee, remain under the supervision of a pastor or a designated supervisor. They shall preach at least 12 times a year or be actively engaged in some other aspect of ministry except in case of ill health or advanced age.
- (2) Pastoral requirements. In the event a certified minister is serving in a position as the pastor, he shall be expected to advance to license to preach within 2 years of acceptance of the pastorate. This shall not apply to any minister who has reached the age of 65 or older, or whose certificate has been issued on a provisional basis. Any exception shall be at the discretion of the District Credentials Committee.

License. Qualifications for license shall be in two categories:

- (1) Preaching ministry. Clear evidence of a divine call, a practical experience in preaching, together with an evident purpose to devote one's time to preaching the gospel. They shall preach at least 15 times a year, except in case of ill health or infirmity. The Credentials Committee maintains the right to re-evaluate annually such ministry and to determine if there is sufficient initiative to justify the holding of a license with the Southern California District Council.
- (2) Specialized ministry. An evident purpose to devote one's time to a specialized ministry such as Christian education, music, church-related ministry by a minister's spouse, or other full-time (at least 30 hours per week) ministries. The same qualifications as outlined in Section 2 of this article shall apply.

Ordained minister. Qualifications for ordination are outlined in the New Testament Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 7-9). In addition:

- (1) Applicants must be 23 years of age or older.
- (2) They must have met all the requirements in making application and in completing the prescribed application form.
- (3) No person may be ordained to the ministry until he shall have held a license to preach and shall have been engaged in active work

as a pastor, evangelist, or some other recognized and proved full-time preaching ministry for at least 2 full consecutive years immediately prior thereto.

- (4) Residency requirements of applicants. Applicants must be residents of or hold credentials in the Southern California District Council when they make application and appear before the District Council Credentials Committee. The District Council does not approve any applicant for ordination who may have been licensed in another district until such licensed minister shall have been a member of the Southern California District Council for at least 1 year. If the applicant has not been a member of the Southern California District Council for 2 full consecutive years, he must meet the requirements and secure the endorsement of the officary of the district in which he was previously licensed, as well as the Southern California District Council Executive Officers.
- (5) Exception to residency requirements. In the event that an applicant has qualified and been approved for ordination by the district of his former residence before being publicly ordained, the Southern California District Credentials Committee may waive the 1 year residency requirement and ordain him upon the request or approval of his former district.
- (6) In order to maintain active status, ordained ministers must preach at least 15 times each year.

PROCEDURAL QUALIFICATIONS

Study course. The Executive Presbytery shall approve the number and names of the Berean College courses needed for each credential level. The Executive Presbytery may prepare and approve an alternative study course for all candidates for ministerial credentials, it being understood that such a study course would necessitate the applicant's passing a standard examination authorized by the General Council General Presbytery. Candidates who have had less than 24 units (6 units per semester for four semesters) of Bible or Bible-related subjects in a Bible-related institute or college recognized by the Assemblies of God shall be required to take the study course with Berean College (or, if available, the alternative course approved by the District Executive Presbytery) for the credential for which they are applying.

Examination. The District Executive Presbytery shall provide an examination, with due regard to doctrine, Bible interpretation, Christian ethics, etc., and said examination shall be given to all candidates for ministerial credentials. Candidates shall be permitted to use the Bible, concordance, and dictionary as reference books during the examination.

Full-time ministry defined. Full-time ministry for receiving and holding credentials shall be defined as follows:

- (1) Any person serving as pastor of a church, or
- (2) Any person other than a pastor, serving in ministry to a church at least 30 hours per week by appointment of the pastor and/or church board, receiving at least 60% of his income from the ministry (the church's ability to pay shall be considered), or
- (3) Any evangelist preaching a minimum of 15 times per year and/or being involved in preaching or teaching ministries at least 26 weeks of the year, or
- (4) Any person in full-time specialized ministries, such as Christian School Administrator, Assemblies of God College personnel, chaplaincy (such as military, penal, hospital), Minister of Christian Education, Minister of Youth, Minister of Music, Associate or Assistant Pastor, etc., and
- (5) Any person applying for ordination shall have preached a minimum of 15 times for two consecutive years prior to their application for ordination.

Part-time ministry defined. Minimum part-time ministry for advancement to license and/or ordination credentials shall be defined as follows:

- (1) Any person serving as pastor of a church, or
- (2) Any person other than a pastor, serving in ministry to a church at least 20 hours per week by appointment of the pastor and/or church board, and who shall be receiving a salary in keeping with the amount of service given to the church (the church's ability to pay shall be considered), or
- (3) Any evangelist preaching a minimum of 15 times per year and/or being involved in preaching or teaching ministries at least 26 weeks of the year, or
- (4) Any person in specialized ministries, such as Christian School Administrator, Assemblies of God College personnel, chaplaincy (such as military, penal, hospital), Minister of Christian Education, Minister of Youth, Minister of Music, Associate or Assistant Pastor, etc., and
- (5) Any person applying for ordination shall have preached a minimum of 15 times for two consecutive years prior to their application for ordination.

Ministerial requirements. All persons seeking ministerial recognition with the Southern California District Council of the Assemblies of God shall be required to complete an application for ministerial recognition. In addition, each candidate shall be required to answer the following questions by stating "I believe," or "I am not sure," or "I do not believe":

- (1) Do you believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God? (2 Timothy 3:16)
- (2) Do you believe in one God eternally existent in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? (Matthew 28:19)
- (3) Do you believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary? (Luke 1:27-35)
- (4) Do you believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be the only begotten Son of God? (John 3:16)
- (5) Do you believe that the sinless life of the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross were both necessary in the divine plan of atonement for the sin of mankind? (Hebrews 9:14-15)
- (6) Do you believe in the efficacy of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of man? (Hebrews 9:22)
- (7) Do you believe that for one to be saved, he must be born again, through faith in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ? (1 Peter 1:23)

- (8) Do you believe that water baptism is to be fulfilled by baptizing in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? (Matthew 28:19)
- (9) Do you believe that immersion is the scriptural mode of water baptism? (Romans 6:4)
- (10) Do you believe in the supernatural manifestations recorded in the Old and New Testaments? (Hebrews 2:3-4)
- (11) Do you believe in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:4)
- (12) Do you believe that the baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance? (Acts 2:4)
- (13) Do you believe that healing for the body is included in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ? (Matthew 8:16-17)
- (14) Do you believe that, though a person has been saved, he can, nevertheless, revert to an unsaved condition and be eternally lost? (Hebrews 6:4-6)
- (15) Do you believe in living a sanctified life? (Hebrews 12:14)
- (16) Do you believe in, teach, and practice tithing? (Malachi 3:10)
- (17) Do you believe that the Lord's Supper is a perpetual ordinance to be frequently observed by Christians? (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- (18) Do you believe in hell (Hades)? (Example as in Luke 16:19-31)
- (19) Do you believe in eternal punishment for the lost (Gehenna)? (See Article V, Section 15 of the General Council Constitution.)
- (20) Do you believe in the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, the righteous to life everlasting and the wicked to eternal damnation? (John 5:28-29)
- (21) Do you believe in the death, burial and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
- (22) Do you believe that the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and their translation, together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, are the imminent and blessed hope of the Church? (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
- (23) Do you believe there will be a Great Tribulation? (Revelation 7:14)
- (24) Do you believe in the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth? (Acts 1:10-11)
- (25) Do you believe in the Millennial Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth? (Revelation 20:6)

ACTION OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEES

Certified and licensed minister. The Southern California District Council Credentials Committee shall recommend candidates who qualify as certified and licensed ministers. The applications of the recommended candidates shall be endorsed by the Southern California District Council Credentials Committee and forwarded to the office of the General Secretary for the issuance of the appropriate credential.

Ordained minister. The General Council Credentials Committee has the authority to recommend candidates who qualify for ordination. The applications of the approved candidates shall be endorsed and recommended by the Southern California District Council Credentials Committee to the General Council Credentials Committee for approval prior to the public ordination. All ordinations shall take place under the auspices of the Southern California District Council.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE HOLDING MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS

The work of the Southern California District Council of the Assemblies of God is supported primarily by contributions received from credentialed ministers. Thereby, it is the obligation and responsibility of all credentialed ministers affiliated with the Southern California District Council to make monthly financial contributions as detailed in the bylaws of the Southern California District Council of the Assemblies of God. Support of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, headquartered in Springfield, Missouri, is also required as detailed in the Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

Current financial requirements for the Southern California District and the General Council are stated in the bylaws as follows:

Southern California District Bylaws **Article XXI** **Section 5. Ministers' Contributions**

- A. It shall be the responsibility of all credentialed ministers affiliated with the Southern California District Council to contribute from his/her/or their tithe, on any and all income received regardless of its source, the following minimum amounts each month:
 - (1) Ordained ministers: 50% of his/her tithes from all sources of income or \$196 per month, whichever is greater.
 - (2) Licensed ministers: 50% of his/her tithes from all sources of income or \$179 per month, whichever is greater.
 - (3) Certified ministers: 50% of his/her tithes from all sources of income or \$156 per month, whichever is greater.

- D. **Obligation to General Council.** All credentialed ministers of the Southern California District are obligated to support the General Council Headquarters in the following amounts: Ordained, \$15.00 per month; Licensed, \$10.00 per month; and Certified Minister, \$5.00 per month.

Note: the amount of financial commitment required of credentialed ministers is subject to change based on actions of the District Council and the General Council.