

**CREDENTIALS MANUAL**  
**of the**  
**CHURCH OF GOD**  
**(Anderson, Indiana)**

**2011**  
**Revised Edition**

**Publisher**

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of the Church of God movement in the United States and Canada

**Editor**

Barry L. Callen

**Revised Edition**

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This 2011 edition of the *Credentials Manual* of the Church of God movement, Anderson, IN, supercedes all previous manuals and is considered the official point of reference for all questions related to the commissioning, licensing, and ordination of called ministers in the Church of God movement. For questions about this Manual, or for securing needed materials related to its implementation, contact Church of God Ministries:

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## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The 1948 General (Ministerial) Assembly of the Church of God was the first to authorize a manual of ministerial ordination, hoping to make more uniform the procedures then being used in the church. Progress was slow. A Congress on Credentials was convened in Indianapolis, Indiana, February, 1986, by the Division of Church Service of the Church of God, with general offices in Anderson, Indiana. At least one representative from 45 of the 53 credentialing units of the Church of God movement then functioning in the United States and Canada participated in that 1986 Congress. The result was the 1986 edition of the *Credentials Manual*.

The Congregational Ministries Team, then a department of Church of God Ministries, Inc., a successor to the earlier Division of Church Service, convened a second Congress on Credentials, this time in Estes Park, Colorado, in March, 1996. This gathering enjoyed even greater church-wide participation than the first congress in 1986. The Steering Committee for the 1996 Congress was comprised of Wayne Dickinson (chair), Chris Cottrell, Ronald Fowler, David Hall, Harold Harness, and Jeannette Flynn. The purpose was to review the 1986 *Credentials Manual* after ten years of use and offer direction for needed revision and republication. The resulting 1997 edition of the *Credentials Manual* was informed significantly by the work of this second congress.

Dr. Barry L. Callen of Anderson University served as revision editor for the 1997 edition. His work was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Directors of Church and Ministry Service and the Leadership Council of the Church of God. Following these adoptions, it was presented to the 1997 General Assembly of the Church of God for its information and then forwarded to credentialing units across the United States and Canada for their individual adoptions and common use.

The 2004 edition of the *Credentials Manual* of the Church of God was the product of the Congress on Credentials convened in October, 2003, again in Estes Park, Colorado. The stated objective of this Congress was (1) to review the credentialing requirements, policies, and procedures being maintained by all assemblies of the Church of God movement throughout the United States and Canada and (2) to adopt a standardized set that would help to make such things more uniform. The result was a revision of the 1997 document and the 2004 *Credentials Manual*.

The Steering Committee for the 2003 Credentials Congress included John Campbell, area administrator, Western Canada; Rene Evans, senior pastor, Jacksonville, FL; Ronald Fowler, senior pastor, Akron, OH; Wayne Harting, area administrator, CDP District; Cynthia James, area administrator, Northern California; Vernon Maddox, area administrator, Ohio; Robert McClure, senior pastor, Gary, Indiana; Rawleigh Quarles, senior pastor, Roanoke, Virginia; Richard Shockey, area administrator, Indiana; and Jeannette Flynn, director of Congregational Ministries of the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana.

The 2007 edition represented a thorough re-editing and re-organizing of the 2004 edition based in large part on the work of the 2006 Credentials Congress that convened in September, 2006, in Chesterfield, Missouri. Jeannette Flynn provided central leadership. With the assistance of five editorial consultants, and under the supervision of Jeannette Flynn and Church of God Ministries, Barry L. Callen again functioned as editor of the *Credentials Manual*. Goals of this 2007 revision included: (1) taking into account many policies and procedures then in effect in the church and (2) designing the document so that it would be as helpful as possible for users.

The Credentials Congress convenings of 1986, 1996, 2003, and 2006 were followed by the most recent Congress. It convened in August, 2010, in Indianapolis, Indiana, with 109 registered members. The intent of this gathering was to identify key credentialing issues, seek consensus stances, and thus laying the groundwork for this, the 2011 edition of the *Credentials Manual*. Leadership of the 2010 Congress was provided by Ryan Chapman, Credentials Services Coordinator of the Church of God Ministries, and Joyce Hazen, Credentials Administrator. They were supported by a Planning Team comprised of Ronald Duncan, Mary Ann Hawkins, Bill Jones, Kimberly Majeski, Randy Montgomery, Charles Myricks, Randall Spence, Doug Talley, and Paula Walford. Barry L. Callen, now Special Assistant to the General Director of Church of God Ministries, functioned as Congress secretary and was named editor of the coming 2011 edition of the *Credentials Manual*.

## HONOR WHERE HONOR IS DUE

In recent decades, four national church leaders have brought inspired vision and given loving leadership to the significant tasks related to ministerial credentialing of the Church of God movement in the United States and Canada. They are: **R. Eugene Sterner**, 1956-1968; **Roscoe Snowden**, 1969-1984; **Keith E. Huttenlocker**, 1985-1994; and **Jeannette R. Flynn**, 1995-2010. In 2010, **Ryan Chapman** assumed this leadership, with the administrative assistance of Joyce Hazen.



**Ronald V. Duncan**  
General Director,  
Church of God Ministries



**Ryan Chapman**  
Credentialing Services  
Coordinator



**Joyce Hazen**  
Credentialing Services  
Assistant

## **INTENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE 2011 *CREDENTIALS MANUAL***

The intent of this *Credentials Manual* is to provide the basis for standards and processes to be used by all recognized ministerial credentialing units associated with the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana) in the United States and Canada. It intends to put biblical foundations into definitional and operational terms for the current recognition and practice of Christian ministry in the Church of God movement. It attempts to reflect the proper balance between legitimate autonomy and needed authority in the church's life.

The calling and gifting by the Holy Spirit for Christian ministry is given priority attention in these pages. It is recognized that there are structural dimensions crucial to supporting and disciplining effectively divine calls and gifts. Ignoring accountability in the patterned relationships in Christian ministry leads to unclear expectations, competing interests, poor communication, and lack of cooperation—all barriers to fulfilling the Christian responsibilities for unity and effectiveness as good stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This *Credentials Manual* affirms the wisdom of establishing covenant agreements. Such agreements help build unity and accountability into the process of credentialing and overall church ministry. It is strongly recommended that covenants be entered into as a priority part of the ministerial credentialing process.

Materials in this *Credentials Manual* are organized with the user in mind. A continuous numbering system presents policies and procedures in a uniform manner, identifying clearly all sections and subsections. Standard forms needed for implementing various aspects of this *Credentials Manual* are identified in section 8.00. These forms are available at Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) and may be reproduced as needed.

The parties for whom this *Credentials Manual* is made available include: (1) prospective ministers wanting to become credentialed; (2) practicing ministers wanting to know responsibilities for maintaining credentials; (3) congregations wanting to know what their obligations are; (4) persons from other faith-groups looking for information on Church of God polity; (5) attorneys or law-enforcement agencies wanting to know specific policies followed for preventing abuse; and (6) Church of God Ministries as it coordinates services and initiates the annual *Yearbook* preparation.

## **STATUS OF THIS *CREDENTIALS MANUAL* IN RELATION TO ITS SEVERAL CONSTITUENCIES**

The biblical doctrine of unity among believers is a landmark conviction of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana). Unity of the Spirit, God's joining believers together to comprise the body of the redeemed, has been the movement's criterion for fellowship. It is the intent that this *Manual* will be used as a tool to build covenant among the church's diverse parts and, thereby, enhance the unity that comes through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's governance of Christ's church.

While biblical unity cannot be legislated, there is wisdom and safety in the formal acceptance of the standards and procedures of this *Credentials Manual*. The common approach for addressing credentialing issues opens a door of disciplined dialogue that protects integrity and enhances unity. Christ unites disciples. This *Credentials Manual* is a tool that helps unite in one significant area of church practice. It puts into definitional and operational form the following conviction that is central to the church's life and leadership:

The mission of the church depends heavily on Spirit-inspired and well-informed leadership. To achieve this mission, ministers of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana) should commit themselves to (1) championing the freedom of the Spirit among us and (2) submitting to each other in mutual love and concern, thus being responsible as called stewards of the divine treasures supplied by God's Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Status of Church of God Ministries and the 2011 *Credentials Manual***

Within the biblical continuum of God-given spiritual freedom and voluntarily assumed church discipline, Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) plays a crucial role for the ministry of the Church of God movement. This body is governed by the Ministries Council of Church of God Ministries, Inc., an Indiana corporation that functions as the coordinating and legal arm of the General Assembly of the Church of God movement and administers the Assembly's work between its meetings.

Legally, it is to the advantage of the various assemblies in the life of the Church of God movement to operate their ministerial credentialing and disciplining processes in accord with this *Credentials Manual*. It is the recommendation of Church of God Ministries that assemblies not modify the standards, policies, and procedures set forth in this *Credentials Manual*, except in instances where some standard or procedure is in direct conflict with local law. It is the further recommendation that assemblies seek legal counsel in relation to any such changes. Any changes should appear as formal amendments to the assembly-approved *Credentials Manual*, and copies of the amendments should be sent for information to the office of Church of God Ministries in Anderson, Indiana.

## **2. Relation of the 2011 *Credentials Manual* to the Various Ministerial Credentialing Bodies in the Church of God**

While this *Credentials Manual* is not automatically binding on the various ministerial credentialing bodies of the Church of God movement in the United States and Canada, it nonetheless is intended to provide uniform expectations and procedures that all credentialing bodies are encouraged to formally endorse and faithfully follow. There is considerable value in a high degree of consistency in the stating of standards and the use of related procedures. Such consistency promotes common understanding and a sense of fairness, and limits potential abuses. Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) has the authority to recognize credentialing bodies in whatever configuration it determines will serve best the needs of the Church of God movement.

Ideally, there should be no overlapping of credentialing committee jurisdictions, including no separate committees in the same jurisdiction divided on racial or ethnic lines. Particularly, there should be no opportunity for a minister to go from one assembly to another in the same jurisdiction for the purpose of achieving desired results on a personal credentialing issue. Church of God Ministries works diligently in the direction of realizing this ideal, being careful to rely whenever possible on dialogue rather than legislative-style intervention to achieve positive results.

## **3. Relation of the 2011 *Credentials Manual* to Actions of the General Assembly of the Church of God**

This *Credentials Manual* does not attempt to list or reproduce the many historic actions of the General Assembly of the Church of God movement that may bear on the standards by which ministers in the Church of God movement are recognized, advised, and disciplined. It acknowledges the existence and potential relevance of such Assembly actions in given circumstances. For presentation of all General Assembly actions from 1917 to 2000, see the book *Following the Light: Teachings, Testimonies, Trials, and Triumphs of the Church of God Movement, Anderson* (Barry L. Callen compiler and editor, published by Church of God Ministries and Warner Press, 2000). This book can be ordered through Warner Press, 1-800-741-7721; order number D-8900. More recent actions may be requested from Church of God Ministries.

## **4. Relation of the 2011 *Credentials Manual* to the Mission of the Church of God Movement**

This *Credentials Manual* has been prepared to assist in the accomplishment of the mission of the body of Christ in general and the mission of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana) in particular. The General Assembly of the Church of God movement formally stated the movement's mission in June, 1988. That statement reads:

The mission of the Church of God is to be a caring community of God's covenant people under the lordship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit:

- To proclaim the love of God, through Jesus Christ, to all persons;
- To enable persons throughout all the world to experience redemptive love in its fullest meaning through the sanctifying power of the gospel, and to know Jesus Christ as Savior, Master, and Lord;
- To call persons to holiness and discipleship;
- To equip persons to be servants of Christ in the world;
- To live as citizens of the kingdom of God here and now, work for justice, mercy and peace, and abide in the Christian hope; and
- To build up the whole body of Christ in unity.

In January, 1995, a Leader’s Visioning Retreat was convened and produced for the Church of God movement a Vision/Action Statement. It included a brief list of reasons why the church exists. The church was said to exist to:

- Worship the Lord;
- Reach the Lost;
- Disciple Believers;
- Equip for Ministry;
- Celebrate the Unity of the Body of Christ; and
- Live Out the Love of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The 2006 Strategic Planning Conference of the Church of God generated five “strategic values” involved in the church’s mission of “transforming culture by being the body of Christ.” They are:

1. **Ignite!** Revitalizing the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) in the life of every individual, church, and agency.
2. **Permeate!** Engaging every individual, church, and agency in the Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-39).
3. **Free!** Committing to stewardship principles (Matt. 6:33) leading to a flexible ministry future and the management of debt (debt free as the goal) for every individual, church, and agency.
4. **Cultivate!** Nurturing the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-7) of every individual, church, and agency.
5. **Refresh!** Renewing our efforts toward relational connectivity and identity (John 17:21-22) for every individual, church, and agency of the Church of God.

This 2011 *Credentials Manual* exists to further these central goals in a fair, thoughtful, and biblical manner.

## **5. Relation of the 2007 *Credentials Manual* to the Whole Body of Christ**

Occasionally there is in this *Credentials Manual* reference to beliefs, standards, or practices widely embraced and generally taught in the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana). The intent of such references is to insure that ministers and congregations affiliated with the Church of God movement are appreciative and supportive of the distinctive heritage and commitments of this particular movement among God’s people. However, they are not intended to be denominational in any exclusive or divisive sense.

It is important to note that the distinctiveness of the Church of God movement features a commitment to the unity of all God’s people. Faithfulness to the biblical revelation is judged central, but with no accompanying assumption that any church body knows all truth best or fully, especially when a church body chooses to isolate itself from honest dialogue with the rest of the believers in Jesus Christ. Therefore, there is no intent here to be sectarian when the teaching tradition of the Church of God movement is appealed to because of its presumed current significance. Rather, policies and strategies contained in this 2011 *Credentials Manual* intend to benefit from and contribute to the larger Christian community—always seeking to build up the church in its intended unity. For a brief summation of the teaching tradition of the Church of God movement, including ongoing dialogue within its own constituency, see the booklet *What We Teach* by Barry L. Callen (Anderson University Press and Church of God Ministries, 2005). See Section 2.13 for a listing of prominent books on the teaching tradition of the Church of God movement.

### **Summation of the Purpose of This 2011 *Credentials Manual***

In accord with a key biblical instruction, this *Credentials Manual* is provided in the hope that the ministry of the church of God generally, and the ministry of the Church of God movement especially, are enabled particularly to:

Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son (Acts 20:28 NRSV).

## **THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF CREDENTIALING COMMITTEES**

At the center of most of the processes of ministerial credentialing described in this *Credentials Manual* is the work of the credentialing committee. The various roles of this committee are so important, and often so sensitive in nature, that members must be chosen with great care, and they must function at the highest level of responsibility to the church and its leaders. Sections 1.11 and 1.12 of this *Manual* detail the purposes, jurisdiction, membership, roles, and accountability of a credentialing committee. These sections should be read with particular care and followed closely. The effective implementation of this *Manual* in general depends on well chosen, appropriately gifted, and properly motivated members of credentialing committees.

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<sup>1</sup> From the unpublished keynote address of Barry L. Callen presented to the Credentials Congress of the Church of God, Estes Park, Colorado, March, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> For these statements and related ones that give fuller perspective, see Barry L. Callen, compiler and editor, *Following the Light* (Anderson, IN: Church of God Ministries and Warner Press, 2000), 306.

## **Section 1.00**

# **THE CREDENTIALING OF VOCATIONAL MINISTERS AND RECOGNITION OF NON-VOCATIONAL CHURCH SERVANTS**

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1.12 Membership, Accountability, Roles

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## **SECTION 1.00**

### **THE CREDENTIALING OF VOCATIONAL MINISTERS AND RECOGNITION OF NON-VOCATIONAL CHURCH SERVANTS**

#### **1.10 Purpose and Roles of a Credentialing Committee**

##### **1.11 Purpose and Jurisdiction of a Credentialing Committee**

The purposes of a credentialing committee (potentially called by differing names) include functioning on behalf of assemblies in commissioning, licensing, and ordaining vocational ministers in the Church of God movement, and in recognizing certain non-vocational servants of the church. The committee periodically approves commissioned, licensed, and ordained ministers and congregations of the Church of God movement. Committee functions may include, but are not necessarily limited to, providing leadership in pastor-congregation conflict resolution, revoking and/or restoring a vocational minister's credentials, supervising the transferring of credentials for ministers from other communions or countries, assisting congregations in securing pastoral leadership, assisting ministers in securing pastoral assignments, facilitating the recognition of congregations and free-standing (para-church) ministry organizations of the Church of God movement, counseling and disciplining congregations, and expediting the administrative reporting of its actions to Church of God Ministries in Anderson, Indiana.

##### **1.12 Membership, Accountability, and Roles of a Credentialing Committee**

- A.** The credentialing committee is established by the governing body of the appropriate assembly and has authority, as set forth in the assembly's bylaws, to make committee decisions and take appropriate actions.
- B.** The governing body that establishes the credentialing committee in each state, district, or province has the responsibility of oversight, accountability, and training of the credentialing committee's membership.
- C.** Any appeal of an action of a credentialing committee goes to the appropriate governing body, as prescribed in the assembly's bylaws or, in cases where a conflict of interest is evident, to appointed representatives of that governing body agreeable to both parties.
- D.** Committee members are expected to participate in and support the life of the Church of God movement and exhibit a high degree of spiritual maturity, gifts of discernment, leadership, redemptive intent, and sufficient ministerial experience to render wise decisions in relation to their ministerial peers.

**E.** In order to gain the caliber of person desired, with the gifts and abilities identified above, it is recommended that those who serve on credentialing committees be ratified rather than elected.

**F.** The membership of a credentialing committee should have a diversity that reflects a fair representation of ministers from the congregations being served. This diversity should include race, color, gender, congregational size, and geographical location. By assembly bylaws, some credentialing committees may have lay members. If not, a credentialing committee should have the authority to call on lay representatives of its authorizing assembly for consultation and assistance in its work.

**G.** Conflicts of interest must be avoided in implementation of the work of a credentialing committee. A conflict of interest exists when a credentialing committee member, in the attempt to make a fair decision on an issue at hand, cannot be separated from a bias related to the decision to be made. Such biased circumstances include being a close friend, relative, advocate, or adversary of the person concerning whom a decision is to be made. When a conflict of interest exists, the involved committee member should voluntarily avoid participation in the decision. If the majority of the committee judges that one of its members has a conflict of interest and the member does not avoid participation voluntarily, it is the committee's responsibility to require that member to be absent while the issue is discussed and decided.

**H.** Most issues discussed by credentialing committees should be kept in strictest confidence. Much of the work of a credentialing committee is sensitive in nature and may have legal implications; it is not, therefore, "for publication." Confidentiality is vital and must be respected in all committee procedures. Information in the files of a credentialing committee should be considered confidential and kept secure.

**I.** Committee members are responsible for sensitive documents. Sensitive documents should be secured and care should be taken to adhere to federal, state, and provincial laws concerning this issue. All documents are the sole property of the credentialing committee and should be returned to the committee by a member upon leaving office. Copies of any and all files made for credentialing purposes should be disposed of according to federal, state, and provincial laws.

**J.** Credentialing committees are to work with a particular spirit and attitude. They exist primarily to support, equip, energize, encourage, and restore. They should not be seen as focusing on the enforcement of restrictive rules and the executing of punishment. Their core functions are to journey with those in preparation, mediate when conflict arises, and restore whenever possible those who experience failure.

## **1.20 The Theology and Purpose of the Credentialing of Vocational of Ministers**

Every Christian disciple has a ministry, and all who are called to ministry should be 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 Survey* (details elsewhere in this *Manual*).

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.

### **1.30 The Three Levels of Credentialing for Vocational Ministers**

#### **1.31 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.

### **1.32 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.

### **1.33 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. See section 2.00 for a fuller description.

## **1.40 Those Who May Be Credentialed by Commission, License, and/or Ordination**

### **1.41 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 this *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 this *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. See "Educational Tracks" in 2.00.

#### **1.42 When Special Circumstances Require Altered Procedures**

Special circumstances sometimes may require altered procedures to serve the best interests of given ministers and their livelihoods. This is particularly true with some chaplains, missionaries, and transfers.

##### **Chaplains**

In the event that time constraints preclude adherence to all of the credentialing procedures outlined in section 3.00, credentialing committees may waive the standard waiting period for chaplains, provided that the candidate otherwise qualifies for ordination.

##### **Missionaries**

Persons called to full-time ministry on the mission field who desire ordination should seek such credentialing from the ordaining assembly representing their home church prior to mission placement. In unusual circumstances, and at the discretion of the credentialing committee of that home assembly, the credentialing process may be modified to enable the missionary to meet time deadlines. For career missionaries under appointment through Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, ministerial credentials issued through their home assemblies are transferred to the Indiana state office of the Church of God for the duration of their time of missionary service.

##### **Transfers from Outside the Church of God Movement**

Ordained ministers entering the ministry of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana) from other communions shall be required to meet all requirements otherwise set forth in this *Credentials Manual* (including background checks, transfer of professional files, and records of any disciplinary action taken). A second interview and the standard waiting time may be waived if circumstances warrant.

Typically, a minister of the Church of God movement may not hold credentials other than those provided by the Church of God. If a transferring minister satisfies all requirements for ordination in the Church of God movement, that minister may be asked to furnish the credentials committee with the previous ordination certificate so that it may be returned to the granting body. The minister then will be issued an ordination certificate by the Church of God movement. Dual credentials may be held in rare cases, but only if there are exceptional circumstances and prior permission is granted by the credentialing committee of the Church of God movement. For

example, dual credentials could be held if a minister satisfies all the requirements for ordination in the Church of God movement, but surrendering a previous ordination would cause the loss of pension benefits.

### **Church of God Ministers Transferring from Outside the United States and Canada**

Persons transferring ministerial credentials from outside the United States and Canada must provide proof of legal status in the United States or Canada. This process must fall within the legal guidelines that prevail. Credentialing committees may assist such persons with gaining any needed legal status.

## **1.50 Servants of Local Congregations Who Are Not Vocational Ministers**

### **1.51 Status of Non-Vocational Church Servants**

Certain persons serve local congregations in specialized ways, although they do not qualify for the standard forms of credentialing reserved for vocational ministers. They serve under the supervision of senior pastors or other congregational leaders. Such specialized church servants, including supply preachers and staff specialists, are not listed in the *Yearbook of the Church of God* and do not vote in state or other duly constituted assemblies, unless granted voting rights through another status. Although not qualifying for ministerial credentialing, such persons may be identified formally by the appropriate assembly's credentialing committee for terms of one or two years, renewable as judged appropriate.

### **1.52 Responsibilities of Credentialing Committees for Non-Vocational Church Servants**

All specialized church servants who are not vocational ministers may be recognized formally by a credentials committee through issuance of a letter of recognition. This letter should specify the precise nature of the church service performed and the identity of the recognizing body and church being served.

## **Section 2.00**

# **STANDARDS FOR CREDENTIALING** **VOCATIONAL MINISTERS**

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## SECTION 2.00

### **STANDARDS FOR CREDENTIALING VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTERS**

#### **2.10 Qualifications for Credentialing Vocational Christian Ministers**

Credentialing vocational Christian ministers occurs at three levels, as explained in sections 1.31-1.33. 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.

#### **2.11 The Motivational Qualification**

***CREDENTIALING IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE INWARDLY CONVINCED THAT GOD HAS SINGLED THEM OUT FOR VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.***

Success in vocational Christian ministry will depend largely on whether or not candidates enter it with the appropriate motivation behind them and the appropriate aims guiding them. The subject of motivation, then, is the first qualification to be addressed by a credentialing committee.

Three motives may beckon one to Christian ministry: (1) a sense of divine call; (2) altruism, the desire to be helpful to others; and (3) egocentricity, the interest in self-advancement. The third is a potentially destructive and unjustifiable motive. The second is laudable, but often shallow. Only the first is adequate. Nothing short of a sense of divine appointment sustains commitment to vocational ministry and the daily call to accountability. It is likely that altruism and even egocentricity enter the picture for most ministers, whether recognized or not; yet, such human motivations must never be dominant.

Consideration should be given to two additional reasons that cause some people to be motivated toward the Christian ministry: (1) unusual pressure from family members or significant associates; and (2) misguided sensitivity to obey God. These two false motives usually can be identified when examination reveals that the candidate's personal interests and aptitudes are incompatible with vocational Christian ministry. It is important to determine whether the candidate is attracted to the ministry by the

honor of titles, anticipation of public acclaim, the prospect of wielding authority, the satisfaction of humanitarian “do-goodism,” a messianic delusion, trying to please others, or a genuine sense of divine call.

Motivation will be measured by such scriptural mandates as Matthew 20:28, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:12, and 1 Peter 5:3. Because proper motivation is such a key component of effective ministry, the credentialing committee, directly or through the supervising mentor named to represent the committee (see section 3.20), should confront every candidate for vocational credentialing with questions such as these:

- A.** Why do you want to be a minister? Describe your call to the Christian ministry.
- B.** As you understand it, what distinguishes a minister from the general “helping” professions? What is the difference between what you feel called to and what every believer is called to?
- C.** What do you think should be the attitude of laypersons toward vocational ministers?
- D.** On what basis would you say that a minister should be recognized as the leader?
- E.** When your ministry is completed, what would you like to have said about your years of service?
- F.** What spiritual gifts do you find in yourself that probably are divine enablement of your ministry?
- G.** What are your devotional practices? Are these adequate to sustain your spiritual health in the midst of the many demands of active vocational ministry?
- H.** How do you cultivate and express your relationship to the ministry of the Church of God movement locally, regionally/provincially, and nationally?
- I.** How do you cultivate and express your relationship to the larger body of Christ beyond the borders of the Church of God movement?

It is strongly recommended that the candidate for vocational credentialing be offered professional testing. The purpose is to better evaluate motivational and other qualifications for vocational Christian ministry.

## 2.12 The Moral and Ethical Qualifications

### ***CREDENTIALING IS FOR THOSE WHOSE CHARACTER AND REPUTATION ARE WORTHY OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.***

Credentialing for vocational ministry requires that the personal conduct, value system, and life-style of candidates be consistent with the standards and disciplines of the Bible as generally understood in the teaching heritage of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana). It can never be guaranteed that all people will speak well of credentialing candidates; even so, there must be in evidence a clear pattern of life being lived in the model of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Spirit.

#### **A. Fitness Measured By Scripture**

The following scriptural passages should be used as a partial basis for evaluation of a candidate's fitness for vocational credentialing:

1. The spiritual test (Titus 1:8, i.e., "holy");
2. The ethical test (Titus 1:7, i.e., "blameless");
3. The self-discipline test (Titus 1:7, "not...arrogant or quick tempered or a drunkard or violent"; Titus 1:8, "master of oneself," "self-controlled"; and 1 Timothy 3:2, "temperate");
4. The confidence test (Titus 2:7, "a model of good deeds");
5. The integrity test (Romans 12:9, "love genuine...hold to the good");
6. The experience test (1 Timothy 3:6, "not a recent convert");
7. The humility test (Romans 12:3, "not think of oneself more highly than one ought to think");
8. The graciousness test (1 Corinthians 13, "patient and kind...not irritable or resentful");
9. The domestic test (1 Timothy 3:4, "must manage one's own household well");
10. The stewardship test (Malachi 3:10, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse"; 1 Timothy 1:12, "I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service").

Ultimately the test of personal character is not one's ability to give correct answers to questions pertaining to morals and ethics. It is the consistent and public demonstration of an authentic Christian life.

#### **B. Code of Ethics**

The ideal of the life of God within is that we continue in life-long growth and development in Christ-likeness (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 3:18). This life is lived out in visible and tangible ways. There is a content-filled ethical lifestyle that the ordained minister should model and that congregations and colleagues in ministry should be able to expect from vocational ministers. It is not to be assumed that a

candidate is aware of the scope and detail of such ethical living. Thus, it is expected that each ministerial candidate become aware of the code of ethics established by the appropriate state/regional assembly, periodically review it, and carefully follow it. If there is not a formal code in place, see Section 8.00 for the Indiana Ministries code of ethics that serves as an excellent example.

### **C. Background Checks**

An essential aspect of confidence concerning the advisability of approving the credentialing of a candidate (or maintaining the credentials of an already licensed or ordained minister) shall include, but not be limited to, the credentialing committee having investigated with due diligence the candidate's: (1) history of criminal convictions, if any; (2) history of alcohol or other substance abuse, if any; (3) history of spouse or child abuse, or sexual misconduct, if any; and (4) history of financial responsibility.

If a candidate for credentialing has been divorced for any reason, including because of the spouse's adultery or abandonment, and seeks vocational credentialing, the credentialing committee is advised to give serious and careful consideration to problems for ministry that may arise from this situation.

### **2.13 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.***

All candidates for vocational credentialing will be required to complete satisfactorily the *Bible Content Survey*. Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, will take responsibility for preparing this survey and establishing the level for its successful completion by credentialing candidates. The primary purpose of the survey is to determine the current level of competence and then direct in a plan for achieving needed growth.

When being examined for biblical and theological understanding, it will not suffice for a candidate to quote a few biblical proof-texts. Nor is it enough to set forth by rote a few creedal-sounding statements that appear traditional. It is only enough to have a broad foundation of theological method and conviction that encompasses, in principle at least, all the issues of life as they pertain to the nature and activity of God. It is only enough when such convictions dictate one's position on moral issues and when, in the midst of crisis, they provide a reason for the hope that lies within (1 Peter 3:15). Scripture itself prescribes the minister's theological qualifications, portraying the minister as one who is "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confront those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9).

Theological understanding can never rest on intellectual investigation alone. By its very nature, it must be experiential as well as academic. Theology ultimately arises out of one's own encounter with the loving embrace of God. True theologizing cannot be done by the unspiritual person, since such a person lacks the insight provided by the presence and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. All ministers should be "theologians." One cannot qualify as a Christian theologian apart from the initial and continuing experience of God's transforming and enlightening grace. One's theological qualifications for vocational credentialing cannot be examined without simultaneously examining the candidate's spiritual qualifications. One can speak authoritatively about God only if one can declare, "I know in whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12).

All candidates will be asked to prepare a written statement of their beliefs regarding the fourteen subjects listed below, and to dialogue about this statement with the credentialing committee or the supervising mentor who has been named to represent the committee. Candidates also will be asked to state how these beliefs find practical application in their own lives and ministries. Answers must be acceptable to the credentialing committee.

The fourteen theological subjects are:

1. The nature and revealing activity of God;
2. The nature and saving mission of Jesus Christ;
3. The Holy Spirit's cleansing and gifting work in the believer's life;
4. Ordinances of baptism, Lord's supper, and feet-washing;
5. Human nature, sinfulness, and destiny;
6. Salvation;
7. Holiness;
8. The nature of the church and church membership;
9. The mission and role of leadership in the church;
10. The nature and importance of Christian unity;
11. Christian stewardship of life and financial resources;
12. The nature and authority of the Bible;
13. The kingdom of God;
14. The second coming of Jesus Christ and related events.

Although the Church of God movement honors theological freedom within the bounds of biblically based belief, those to whom vocational credentialing is granted are expected to hold persuasions that are in general agreement with the teaching tradition of the Church of God movement. Each credentialing body, directly or working through the designated supervising mentor, should supply the candidate with a list of recommended Church of God doctrinal books and hold the candidate accountable for having read them. Recommended are:

- Russell R. Byrum, *Christian Theology* (1925, 1982)
- Barry L. Callen, *It's God's Church!* (1995)
- Barry L. Callen, *Contours of a Cause* (1995)

- Barry L. Callen, *God As Loving Grace* (1996)
- Barry L. Callen, *Faithful in the Meantime* (1997)
- Barry L. Callen, *What We Teach* (booklet, 2005)
- Barry L. Callen, *Caught Between Truths* (2006)
- Barry L. Callen and Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (2006)
- Frederick G. Smith, *What the Bible Teaches* (1914)
- John W. V. Smith, *I Will Build My Church* (1985)
- Gilbert W. Stafford, *Theology for Disciples* (1996)
- Gilbert W. Stafford, *Vision for the Church of God at the Crossroads* (2002)
- Merle D. Strege, *Tell Me a Tale* (1991) and *Tell Me Another Tale* (1993)
- Merle D. Strege, *I Saw the Church* (2002)

Additional books may be recommended by the supervising mentor in collaboration with the credentialing committee.

## 2.14 The Dispositional and Relational Qualifications

***CREDENTIALING IS FOR THOSE WHOSE PERSONAL DISPOSITION IS CONSISTENTLY IN KEEPING WITH THAT EXPECTED OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.***

The personality and performance of ministers are indivisible. If the gospel message is to be credible and contagious, ministers must be credible and contagious themselves. If their services are to be welcome, they themselves must be welcome. Their presence should affect others in a positive way. Ideally, their manner will be a reflection of their walk with Christ and will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. They will demonstrate a high degree of emotional maturity, as evidenced by mastery of their own attitudes. Professional poise should be evident in a range of circumstances.

The candidate's dispositional and relational qualification for ministry may be measured by such scriptural mandates as Matthew 5:22, 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 2:3-5, and Hebrews 12:14. In assessing a candidate's fitness for vocational credentialing, the credentialing committee, directly or through the supervising mentor, shall consider questions like the following. Is the candidate...

- Susceptible to wide mood swings?
- Prepared to cope constructively with disagreement?
- Prepared to endure rejection and denial?
- Inclined to pout, threaten, berate, or otherwise manipulate?
- Chronically negative in outlook?
- Consistently congenial and approachable?
- A calming influence in the midst of crisis?
- Objective in judgment?
- Sensitive to the feelings of others and aware of how others experience the candidate?
- Self-controlled?

- Adaptable?
- Affirming of others?
- Excessively phobic or neurotic?
- Appropriately self-critical?
- A “team player” capable of leading, honoring, and building up colleagues in the process?
- Quick to anger? Prone to defensiveness?

Christian ministry requires a high level of emotional adjustment and social skill. It is imperative to identify early any destructive tendencies. If married, vocational Christian ministry also requires a spouse who is supportive of the ministerial call. Since it is virtually impossible to find answers to the above questions in a single interview, credentialing committees are urged to consult with the candidate’s supervising mentor, who can observe the candidate in a variety of settings, and to provide for the use of evaluation instruments.

## **2.15 The Educational Qualification**

***CREDENTIALING IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO ADEQUATE EDUCATION FOR THE MINISTERIAL PROFESSION.***

Early in its history, the Church of God movement recognized the need for ministerial preparation. Both history and experience reinforce the need for an adequately prepared ministry in order to function effectively in today’s complex world. This preparation not only focuses on the beginning period of entering ministry, but extends throughout one’s ministry—regardless of academic degrees earned. While the church affirms that God provides divine gifts to called servants for ministry, it likewise affirms that refinement of such gifts is always needed and that other abilities and skills must be developed.

There should be a formal structure of ministerial preparation to enable the fuller presence of what the New Testament requires (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). This biblical requirement includes a divine call, a divine endowment to help implement the call, emotional and spiritual maturity, and a program of comprehensive studies to better inform and enable God’s call to ministry.

It is strongly recommended that all vocational ministers of the Church of God movement attain a seminary education or its equivalent. However, the diversity of circumstances out of which Church of God ministers respond to God’s call necessitates that flexibility be allowed in ministerial preparation. Because circumstances, such as the minister called in later life, may affect how one pursues education, several options are offered. These educational options are presented here as *tracks*. The credentialing committee will determine which track is appropriate for each credentialing candidate, based on the individual circumstances of the candidate.

When a seminary or seminary-bound student, as described in Track #1 below, has

been identified and has informed a credentialing committee of the intent to prepare for vocational credentialing under its guidance, that committee should interact with that student throughout the balance of the educational process. The credentialing committee should suggest to the student areas of study and training, skill levels, and placement expectations for entry-level vocational ministers, as well as offer support, encouragement, and information about the credentialing process.

Following are details on the three tracks of preparation for ordination to vocational Christian ministry.

### **EDUCATIONAL TRACK # 1**

Track #1 shall apply to credentialing candidates who have earned or are pursuing a seminary degree appropriate to the vocational ministerial calling. When circumstances allow, this is the recommended track for all credentialing candidates. Candidates possessing a seminary degree are encouraged to upgrade their education continually throughout the years of their active ministry. Seminary graduates shall be under supervision for a minimum of one year.

So that a referral file may be established, the seminary or college being attended should identify and then refer to Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, the seminary or seminary-bound students anticipating service with the Church of God movement. Preferably, this should be done during the student's first seminary year. Periodically, Church of God Ministries should remind schools of the importance of such early identification of ministerial students belonging in Track #1.

All Church of God ministerial students entering seminary, or upper-class college students anticipating seminary education, should determine with which credentialing committee they anticipate pursuing credentialing. They then should inform that committee in writing of this anticipation. It is the responsibility of the ministerial student to inform the appropriate credentialing committee of credentialing intentions.

### **EDUCATIONAL TRACK # 2**

Track #2 shall apply to candidates for credentialing who have earned or who expect to earn a baccalaureate degree, but who do not anticipate attending a seminary program. For such persons, a ministerial education major is strongly encouraged. Degreed persons lacking such a major should seek appropriate church and theologically related educational opportunities, preferably under the guidance of the credentialing committee. With the guidance of the college attended, current undergraduate ministerial students (not intending seminary) shall enter into an internship relationship with a Church of God minister (or a minister of similar theological beliefs, spirit, polity, and message) for a period of at least one year to experience the various aspects of local church ministry.

Those persons on Track #2 who already are in positions of ministry shall arrange, to the satisfaction of the credentialing committee, for a minimum of two years of supervision by a mentoring minister.

### **EDUCATIONAL TRACK #3**

Track #3 shall apply to candidates for credentialing who have enjoyed few, if any, opportunities for higher education or who have earned or expect to earn up to the equivalent of two years of college credit, but likely will not complete a baccalaureate program.

Persons entering Track #3 are expected to complete a minimum of twenty continuing education units (CEU's for 200 hours) certified through the Center for Christian Leadership of Anderson University School of Theology, or as approved by the appropriate credentialing committee. Such instruction might include pastoral institutes, recognized correspondence courses, management institutes, hospital seminars, audits of local college courses, camp meeting seminars, personal evangelism institutes, regional training events, Church of God Ministries workshops, directed reading courses, and other credible learning opportunities, including those provided by church-related colleges. Where applicable, previous life and ministerial experiences may satisfy part or all of these requirements.

Persons on this track shall also arrange, to the satisfaction of the credentialing committee, for a minimum of two years of supervision by a mentoring minister. For further information and guidance regarding such supervision, see section 3.00.

#### **2.16 The Vocational Qualification**

***CREDENTIALING IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE PEERS IN POSITION AND PERFORMANCE OF THOSE WHO ARE VOCATIONALLY ENGAGED IN PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.***

In most instances, the appropriateness of a candidate's pursuit of vocational credentialing should be obvious. The service to the church is of such nature, and the tenure of that service is of such duration, as to commend vocational credentialing. Obedient and joyful response to the call of God leads an individual to the vocation of ministry. As described in Scripture (such as Acts 9:1-19, 13:1-5, 1 Timothy 4:11-16, and Jeremiah 1:4-10), the vocation of ministry becomes a consuming passion.

There are, however, some cases in which vocational credentialing is questionable. This is especially true when the service rendered is not typically classified as professional ministry, or the candidate is not routinely engaged in such ministry. Vocational ministry is much more than sharing leadership roles in the church (such as Sunday school teacher, worship leader, usher, etc.). While all leaders are called to be witnesses of the gospel and gifted leaders in the church, some are set apart and called by God for the vocation of Word, ordinances, ministry, and mission.

Readiness for vocational ministry may be recognized in preparation (what we do), enabling (what God does in us), and the developing of wisdom (what we become). Readiness begins with a call and launches the candidate on a path of commitment and preparation. Vocational ministry requires a high level of readiness and a consuming passion to make ministry one's vocation. In cases where the appropriateness of seeking vocational credentialing is questionable, the guidelines for the recognition and credentialing of ministers found in section 1.00, and the conditions for granting vocational credentialing found in section 2.20, shall determine what form of recognition or credentialing is appropriate.

## **2.20 Conditions for Granting Vocational Credentialing**

Those charged with granting credentialing to vocational Christian ministers must be guided by principles that are consistent with sound judgment and fair practice; they also must be held in high regard by the body of ministers. Otherwise, subjective decisions will be made and irregularities will result. Some may be credentialed undeservingly; others may be denied unfairly. In approaching the decision to recommend credentialing to vocational Christian ministry, credentialing committees should be guided by the following principles and conditions.

### **2.21 Reasonable Doubt Is Removed**

Credentialing to vocational Christian ministry will not be granted until its advisability is beyond reasonable doubt. If, at the end of the one or two-year period used for background checks, interviews, and working with the supervising mentor (as called for in section 3.00), questions remain regarding the kind and quality of the candidate's ministerial service, about the regularity of that service, about doctrinal readiness, personal and professional fitness, unresolved matters in background checks, or lifelong intent to pursue vocational ministry, vocational credentialing will be delayed and the candidate's file kept open. In most cases, time will reveal whether vocational credentialing is in order. It should be the credentialing committee's position that it is always less painful to delay than to revoke or tolerate the consequences of premature credentialing.

### **2.22 The Ministry is Overtly Religious in Nature**

Vocational credentialing will be granted only to those whose ministerial service is overtly religious in nature. While there is much Christian service that is laudable and doubtless honored by our Lord, not all service is Christian ministry in the vocational sense. Those practices that are basically secular, humanitarian, and/or common to all servants of Jesus Christ do not warrant vocational credentialing. If credentials are not required for performance of the service, and not strategic to the professional status of those offering the service, or if the public perception of the candidate is not that of a Christian minister, then vocational credentialing is not in order.

Vocational credentialing is reserved for those who are engaged in Christian ministry in a way that is primary and not incidental to their ministerial call and exercise. This does not mean that those ministers who must supplement their incomes with employment in other

than Christian ministry shall be ineligible for vocational credentialing, but that Christian ministry must be the primary calling to which they are responding.

### **2.23 Candidate Is Gifted and Willing for Vocational Christian Ministry**

Vocational credentialing shall be granted only to those who have been divinely called and have demonstrated a sustained willingness, ability, and spiritual giftedness to engage in professional Christian ministry.

A minimum of one year of continuous and satisfactory service in a bona fide ministerial position is required prior to ordination, unless other arrangements are made with the credentialing committee. In addition, candidates must declare their intention to engage in the same or equal levels of ministry in the future and be deemed by their abilities likely to obtain such opportunity.

A statement of intention to serve in Christian ministry does not in itself constitute justification for vocational credentialing. Exceptions may be made when such credentialing is a requirement for placement, such as with chaplaincy positions. It should, however, be understood prior to ordination that credentials will be suspended if the anticipated position is not secured. Even when candidates are active in ministry, there must be assurance that their involvement is more than temporary.

### **2.24 Involvement Is Substantial; Ministry Is Professional**

Vocational credentialing shall be granted only to those whose involvement in Christian ministry is substantial and whose position is generally considered professional in nature (see section 1.40). Unremunerated and informal service shall not apply toward experience required for vocational credentialing, except where it clearly shows that substantial ministry, such as would normally be provided by a remunerated person, has been rendered.

The practice of creating positions and bestowing titles in order to create justification for vocational credentialing should not be honored by credentialing committees. If ordination is to be honored by God and respected by the church and the world, it must not serve as the primary basis for the minister's recognition, but rather as acknowledgment of what God obviously has done and intends through the life of a called, committed, and gifted ministerial servant.

## **Section 3.00**

### **THE CREDENTIALING PROCESS**

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## Section 3.00

### THE CREDENTIALING PROCESS

#### **3.10 Sequence of Steps in the Credentialing Process**

The following paragraphs outline the appropriate steps by which a minister applies for and then, based on qualifications met, may be commissioned, licensed, and/or ordained. Questions about the process leading to credentialing at any of these levels should be forwarded to the chair of the appropriate credentialing committee (name, address, e-mail address, and phone number are available in the current *Yearbook* of the Church of God).

The credentialing committee shall establish and maintain a professional file for each credentialed minister and congregation in the jurisdiction of its assembly. This file shall contain all of the documents detailed below. The confidentiality and security of this file are discussed elsewhere.

#### **3.11 Letter of Intention**

The ministerial candidate makes known the desire to be considered for credentialing by writing or emailing a letter of intent to both the chair of the appropriate credentialing committee and the appropriate assembly office, declaring clearly the sense of divine call to Christian ministry. This letter should also state a desire to pursue vocational credentialing in the Church of God movement.

#### **3.12 Application Forms**

Upon receipt of the letter of intention, the chair of the credentialing committee will arrange for the following to be mailed to the credentialing candidate:

##### **A. Ministerial Application**

This Ministerial Application form is biographical in nature and should be returned by the applicant to the credentialing committee chair, along with the stated application fee to cover background check, testing, a copy of the *Credentials Manual*, and other processing fees.

##### **B. Ministerial Endorsement Form**

The Ministerial Endorsement Form should be completed by the applicant's pastor, former pastor, or major professor (if in college or seminary) and returned directly to the credentialing committee chair.

### **C. Authorization to Request/Maintain/Release Information Form**

Each credentialing candidate is required to sign an Authorization to Request/Maintain/Release Information form stating the candidate's permission for information received to become part of that candidate's professional file. This file shall be considered permanent and transferable to an appropriate and secure authority on the occasion of the minister's choice to transfer to the jurisdiction of another assembly.

### **3.13 Bible Content Survey**

The Bible Content Survey is administered by the credentialing committee or a person acting at its direction. Acceptable results are expected. The survey may be re-administered as necessary in the ongoing process of professional growth. For detailed information, see Section 8.00 of this Manual.

### **3.14 Background Checks**

A variety of background checks and reports is to be required of a candidate for vocational credentialing. They include a focus on criminal and financial histories, a spiritual gifts inventory, and a personality profile. If the testing reveals a problem, professional counseling, at the candidate's expense, may be required. There even may be a re-evaluation of the fitness for Christian ministry.

### **3.15 Mailing of the Ministerial Evaluation Survey and *Credentials Manual*; Setting the Initial Interview Date**

Once the Ministerial Application, the Ministerial Endorsement Form, and background checks and releases have been completed and received by the chair of the credentialing committee, and upon administration of the Bible Content Discovery Survey and satisfaction that the prerequisite qualifications listed in section 1.20 are met, the applicant will be mailed the following:

#### **A. Six Copies of the Ministerial Evaluation Survey**

The applicant is to distribute these forms to a total of six (6) evaluators. Three of these should be recognized Church of God ministers (other than your endorser) and professors. If a person is entering from another religious body, recognized ministers in that body should be used. Three additional copies are to be distributed to reputable laypersons who are well acquainted with the applicant. All completed forms should be returned directly to the chair of the credentialing committee.

#### **B. A Copy of the Current *Credentials Manual***

Within thirty days following receipt, or within two months of the distribution of all six completed Ministerial Evaluation Survey forms (whichever comes earlier), the credentialing committee chair shall

establish a date for the initial interview of the applicant by the committee and send the applicant a copy of this *Credentials Manual*.

### **3.16 Initial Interview Process and Decision**

- A.** The initial interview of the candidate by the credentialing committee will address directly the six categories identified in this *Credentials Manual* as crucial to professional Christian ministry (see sections 2.11 through 2.16). These six categories will be explored with the candidate to help determine fitness for vocational Christian ministry. If the applicant is married, ideally the spouse will be present for this interview.
- B.** Based on the results of this initial interview, the credentialing committee may decide to: (1) proceed with the credentialing process; (2) postpone any action; or (3) deny further consideration. In rare cases such as military or institutional chaplains where sufficient cause is present, the committee may decide to ordain outside the normal time frame, whether or not commissioning and licensing have taken place.
- C.** The applicant is to be informed of the committee's decision as soon as possible (in most instances within two weeks). The action may be to deny further consideration. If the action is to postpone the decision, steps may be proposed to enhance the applicant's qualifications as conditions for further consideration.
- D.** If credentialing is approved, a one-year or two-year commission or license will be issued, whichever is deemed most appropriate, thereby granting the applicant ministerial status and inclusion on the approved list.

### **3.17 After the Minister Is Commissioned**

- A.** The credentialing committee will follow commissioning with the assignment of a supervising mentor who, at the end of one year, will file a report with the credentialing committee chair. This report will help the committee assess the candidate's progress in each of the six qualifications for ministry described in section 2.10, and the candidate's readiness if additional credentialing is being considered. See section 3.25 for a detailed description of the responsibilities of the supervising mentor.
- B.** The credentialing committee will determine which of the three educational tracks is to be followed by the candidate (see section 2.15) and any special areas of concern to which the candidate's supervising mentor is to pay particular attention. Such concerns may call for a reading program to be recommended, a continuing education plan to be followed, and/or position papers to be written. Individual needs will be taken into consideration.

C. The candidate will proceed with writing the theological and biblical documents in each of the areas listed in section 2.13.

D. When the candidate's written expression of beliefs is completed and judged satisfactory to the credentialing committee, a one-year or two-year renewable license will be issued.

### **3.18 Follow-up Interview with the Commissioned Minister, Possible Subsequent Interviews, and Decision**

A. Typically, a second interview with the candidate by the credentialing committee is to occur after at least one year of commissioned status and supervision. If the candidate is married, the spouse should be present for this second interview (unless prior arrangements are made to the committee's satisfaction). This interview will address the status and content of the written fourteen theological statements and the individualized program of assigned reading, writing, continuing education, etc., that was established after the first interview. Additional interviews may be required based on the candidate's level of readiness.

B. Based on this second interview, the supervising mentor's report, and the status of the theological statements, the credentialing committee may decide to renew the commission for another year, give further direction to what is needed in the second year, license the candidate for a one-year or two-year period, or terminate the credentialing process.

### **3.19 From Licensing to Ordination**

During the period of the license, the candidate shall prepare in writing a "Life And Ministry Plan" (LAMP). The LAMP is a planning tool that sets direction, limits, and the means by which personal and pastoral health is to be achieved and maintained in the areas of spirituality, connectedness, knowledge, vision, leadership, and physical and emotional health. For further materials providing definition of and guidance for developing a LAMP, see Section 8.00 of this manual.

This life and ministry plan will be reviewed with the supervising mentor and, when ready, submitted to the credentialing committee. Based on the report of the supervising mentor, the candidate's ability to meet the several qualifications for ministry (see sections 2.11–2.16), and the life and ministry plan submitted by the licensed minister, the credentialing committee will do one of the following:

- A. Recommend ordination;
- B. Postpone ordination and renew the license;
- C. Deny ordination and renew the license;
- D. Deny ordination and deny renewal of the license.

### **3.20 The Program of Supervision**

Each credentialing committee of the Church of God movement should establish an ongoing program of supervision for those persons in the vocational credentialing process. The following are the purposes for and responsibilities of this program.

#### **3.21 Purposes and Implementation**

The implementation of the ministerial supervision program is to be informed by the educational “track” system described in section 2.15 of this *Credentials Manual*. It is to be suited to the individual minister in accord with that person’s current development and long-term plan of continuing preparation for ministry. The purposes of the ministerial supervision program are:

- A.** To assist the candidate in implementing the procedures outlined in this *Credentials Manual*. This will include guiding the candidate in writing the theological statements required during the commission phase of credentialing and in developing the life and ministry plan required in the license phase. Meetings between the candidate and supervising mentor are to supplement interviews and meetings with the credentialing committee.
- B.** To provide the candidate with support in the practical aspects of ministry. The supervising mentor shall serve as friend and teacher to the candidate during this time, both encouraging and prompting needed development.
- C.** To provide the candidate with self-understanding through the eyes of a trusted friend and objective colleague. It shall be the responsibility of the supervising mentor to interpret to the candidate how the candidate is perceived in relationships with others and how the candidate might best approach ministry. On occasion, this process may require the supervising mentor to confront the candidate charitably with any weaknesses that the candidate may have.
- D.** To provide the credentialing committee with an opportunity to monitor the candidate’s progress and assess readiness for vocational credentialing.
- E.** To provide supervision designed not to threaten, but to be a means of support whereby a minister may be assisted in the pursuit of maximum effectiveness in ministry. The further intent is to provide for the security of ministerial integrity and congregational prosperity by requiring quality spiritual, emotional, moral, and technical preparation for professional ministry.
- F.** To provide the supervising mentor with the time necessary to observe the minister at work. Supervision includes time for instruction, clarification, discernment, evaluation, reflection, and encouragement.

### **3.22 Schedule of Meetings with the Supervising Mentor**

The chosen supervising mentor shall meet with the candidate a minimum of twelve times during the period between the candidate's first interview with the credentialing committee and that committee's decision concerning recommendation for ordination. The supervising mentor shall make a minimum of two reports per year. The specific schedule shall be worked out by the supervising mentor and candidate.

### **3.23 The Supervision Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee**

- A.** To provide guidance to each candidate for vocational credentialing as early in the process as possible.
  
- B.** To contact and determine a selected supervising mentor's willingness to function in this key role before formally assigning a candidate to this mentor. A member of the credentialing committee, a respected neighboring pastor, the candidate's senior minister (if the candidate is serving as an associate or intern), or other qualified minister may serve as supervising mentor, subject to the credentialing committee's advance approval.
  
- C.** To make available this *Credentials Manual* and, particularly, these guidelines to every supervising mentor and credentialing candidate.
  
- D.** To follow up on the work of the supervising mentor and the results of the interviews and be sure that the relationship between the mentor and the one being mentored is functioning appropriately for both.

### **3.24 Responsibilities of the Candidate Being Mentored**

- A.** To read this *Credentials Manual* and note with care its standards and procedures.
  
- B.** To take the initiative in following through on all responsibilities required in the vocational credentialing process.
  
- C.** To attend regularly and participate constructively in all meetings scheduled with the supervising mentor.
  
- D.** To make a determined effort to benefit from the counsel and guidance of the supervising mentor.
  
- E.** To make a determined effort to participate in appropriate ministerial meetings and events, including meetings of the related assembly.

### **3.25 Responsibilities of the Supervising Mentor**

**A.** To be familiar with the formal standards and necessary procedures for ministerial commissioning, licensing, and ordination.

**B.** To help the candidate set up a regular schedule of supervisory appointments. These appointments should provide blocks of time in which the candidate may reflect with the supervising mentor on a range of matters related to vocational credentialing.

**C.** To be aware that the candidate will be interviewed by the credentialing committee in regard to the following, and thus assist the candidate in preparation for responding in an informed manner. The role is not instructing the candidate in the “right” answers, but insuring that the candidate engages insightfully the following themes and categories:

- Sense of God’s call;
- General fitness (health, attitudes, family circumstances, attitude of spouse, opportunities for and possibilities of future ministry);
- Theological understandings (see section 2.13);
- Personal relationships and leadership style (see section 2.14);
- Background as an active member in Christian fellowship;
- Scriptural tests for ministry (see section 2.13);
- Educational qualifications (see section 2.15); completed and future educational plans;
- Financial responsibility.

**D.** To provide opportunities for the candidate to observe the supervising or other appropriate minister function in as many roles as possible (e.g., counseling, weddings, funerals, teaching, preaching, worship leadership, and committee responsibilities).

**E.** To suggest resources for additional information or study (e.g., books, magazines, web sites, resource centers, college offerings).

**F.** To observe how the candidate functions in a range of ministerial opportunities.

### **3.26 Objectives of the Supervision Program**

**A.** The primary objective of the supervision program is to facilitate the candidate’s personal and professional growth, assisting the candidate to:

- Solidify personal direction.
- Reach a refined definition of ministry.
- Become aware of the complexity of human relationships

that are faced in Christian ministry.

- Further progress in a maturing style of ministry.
- Develop skills and assume responsibilities in various areas of ministry.
- Encourage spiritual growth and wisdom.

**B.** Opportunity may be given to the ordination candidate to discuss and evaluate progress in the following areas:

- a. Preaching and teaching, including the communication of the Christian faith and life in sermon, lesson, evangelism, meditation, etc.
- b. Worship, including leadership in worship, conducting ordinances, and worship planning.
- c. Pastoral care and calling, including hospital calling, crisis counseling, membership development, and recruiting volunteer leadership.
- d. Leadership and management, including group dynamics, interpersonal relations with church leadership, church business, and office management.
- e. Personal devotional development, including prayer and acquaintance with devotional classics in addition to the Bible.
- f. Personal life management, including family relationships and personal finances.

### **3.30 Summary of the Steps in Qualifying for Vocational Credentialing**

Following are the thirteen steps detailed above that form the path toward vocational credentialing. Listing them here provides a concise review for their users.

**1. Letter of Intention:** The ministerial candidate sends a letter of intention to the chair of the credentialing committee of the appropriate assembly.

**2. Application and Authorization Forms Provided:** The chair of the credentialing committee assures conveyance to the candidate of the appropriate forms, including a Ministerial Application, the Authorization to Request, Maintain, and Release Information, and a Ministerial Endorsement Form.

**3. Background Checks, Reports Requested:** When the application and endorsement forms are completed and received with the stated application fees, the credentialing committee initiates background checks, requests whatever reports on a spiritual gifts inventory or personality profile are deemed necessary, and mails to the candidate six copies of the Ministerial Evaluation Survey.

**4. Bible Content Survey Administered:** Administration of the *Bible Content Survey* takes place during this application period.

- 5. Initial Interview:** When the application process and all necessary forms and reports have been satisfactorily completed and received, the credentialing committee establishes a date for an initial interview with the candidate (and spouse, if married).
- 6. Decision Regarding Credentialing:** Based on the results of the interview and the completed materials, the credentialing committee decides either to credential or to deny credentials.
- 7. Commissioning:** If the decision is to credential, a one-year or two-year commission is issued. In some instances, licensing may be the choice.
- 8. Supervising Mentor and Educational Track Are Assigned:** For the commissioned minister, the credentialing committee assigns a supervising mentor (see section 3.20) and determines the educational requirements to be expected of the candidate (see section 2.15).
- 9. Mentor and Commissioned Minister Meet:** The supervising mentor meets with the candidate a minimum of twelve times from the time of appointment to the final interview regarding vocational credentialing.
- 10. The Theological Statements:** The commissioned minister prepares written statements on the fourteen theological subject areas detailed in section 2.13. These statements must be judged satisfactory prior to licensing. The candidate must also meet other requirements in the various areas of qualification, including motivational, moral and ethical, theological and biblical, dispositional and relational, educational, and vocational.
- 11. Decision Regarding Licensing:** Based in large part on the supervising mentor's reports, the written theological statements, and progress in other assignments, the credentialing committee decides to license, to extend the commission, or to terminate the credentialing process.
- 12. Licensing:** If licensing is approved, the licensed minister prepares and submits to the credentialing committee a life and ministry plan as described in section 3.18.
- 13. Follow-Up Interview and the Decision Regarding Ordination:** Based in part on the supervising mentor's reports and the life and ministry plan submitted, the credentialing committee decides on, and conveys to the candidate, a recommendation either to ordain, postpone ordination and renew the license, deny ordination and renew the license, or deny both ordination and license renewal.

### **3.40 When Ordination Has Been Approved: The Act of Ordination**

#### **3.41 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee**

At such time as a candidate is judged by the credentialing committee to be ready for ordination, the committee shall pursue the following steps, always subject to the bylaws of the state, regional, or provincial assembly of the church:

- A. Seek approval by the assembly responsible for ministerial recognition. At the earliest opportunity, the minister's name will be presented to the appropriate body, with the recommendation that ordination be granted.
- B. Arrange for an ordination service. According to specifications established by the credentialing committee, and with consideration of the candidate's desires, the committee and the candidate shall plan jointly for the service of ordination. This service can be in the candidate's home church or in an assembly or other appropriate meeting of the church.
- C. The Ordination Covenant is to be signed by the candidate and a copy filed with both the assembly and Church of God Ministries in Anderson, Indiana.

#### **3.42 The Service of Ordination**

The service of ordination should be one of dignity and meaning—a time to be remembered and cherished. Any such service should include at least recognition by ministerial peers in the Church of God movement, support of the larger church community, and affirmation of Christian ministry by the one being ordained.

#### **3.43 Certificates and Registration of Ordination**

Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) is the official registrar of credentialing certificates for the ministry of the Church of God movement in the United States and Canada. Each assembly, when it grants credentials, acts on behalf of the whole church; therefore, its actions and formal recognitions should conform to those of other assemblies. Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, cannot be responsible for correctly certifying a minister's status as one properly ordained unless official notification is given to it by the ordaining assembly and the ordination is then recorded by Church of God Ministries.

## **Section 4.00**

# **REGISTRATION FOR THE *YEARBOOK* OF THE CHURCH OF GOD BY MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS**

### **Contents of This Section**

- 4.10 Responsibilities of Church of God Ministries, Inc.**
- 4.20 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee**
  - 4.21 The Committee Responsibilities for the *Yearbook* Registration of Ministers Moving Out of or Into its Jurisdiction
  - 4.22 Use of the Expected Fifteen Congregational Attributes
- 4.30 Responsibilities of Individual Ministers and Congregations**
  - 4.31 Initiative for Participation and Registration
  - 4.32 Required Date
  - 4.33 Moving During Registration Period
  - 4.34 The Right of Appeal
  - 4.35 *Yearbook* Title Codes
- 4.40 Responsibilities of Specialized Ministers and Ministry Groups**
  - 4.41 Specialized Ministers
  - 4.42 Specialized Ministry Groups
- 4.50 Failure to Register by Ministers and Congregations**
  - 4.51 For Ministers
  - 4.52 For Congregations

## **SECTION 4.00**

### **REGISTRATION FOR THE *YEARBOOK* OF THE CHURCH OF GOD BY MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS**

#### **4.10 Responsibilities of Church of God Ministries, Inc.**

- A. Establish the process, procedures, and schedule for annual registration of ministers and congregations.
- B. Inform ministers, congregations, credentialing committee chairs and/or assembly offices of the registration process, procedures and schedules.
- C. Provide definitions of classifications for ministers to be used in the *Yearbook*. See below (section 4.35) for more detail about classifications and their definitions. For convenience, these will be available with the registration information.
- D. Prepare and make available to each assembly a list of all ministers and congregations eligible to register for the purpose of indicating the current approval status.
- E. Make available upon request the information gathered through the registration process for ministers and congregations within their respective assembly.

#### **4.20 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee**

- A. Maintain a current list of all ministers whose credentials are held by that assembly. The list should include current classification, contact information, and approval status of each minister. It is very important that only bona fide ministers be listed.
- B. Maintain a current list of all congregations within the jurisdiction of that assembly. The list should include contact information and current approval status. Congregations with provisional status are to be included. It is very important that only congregations should be listed that are complying with the *Fifteen Expected Attributes of Church of God Congregations* found in section 6.11.
- C. Review lists of ministers and congregations provided annually by Credentials Services of Church of God Ministries.
  - 1. Compare lists with those maintained by the assembly
  - 2. Provide updated information

3. Mark approval status according to categories identified
4. Submit to Credentials Services of Church of God Ministries the proper forms to report actions taken (transfer, official notification, etc.)

#### **4.21 The Committee's Responsibilities for Ministers Moving Out of or Into Its Jurisdiction**

A. For the minister moving out of a jurisdiction to transfer with clear recommendation, the moving minister should contact, in writing, the regional pastor and overseer and/or credentials committee chair in the assembly where currently ministering and request that an Inter-Assembly Transfer be sent to the credentialing committee in the jurisdiction to which one is moving (see section 5.31-A). In this way, proper transfer and recommendation can occur between assemblies (see sections 5.31 and 5.32). The sending assembly also should send a copy of the transfer to Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana.

If there are any problems, it is only fair and honest that the chair of the receiving credentialing committee be informed. The minister's professional file or record should also be sent (see sections 3.10 and 5.32 C). If problems are discovered after the minister's departure, the chair of the credentialing committee of the receiving assembly should be informed.

B. A credentialing committee should approve ministers moving into its jurisdiction on these conditions:

1. Approve on condition that there is in hand a letter of recommendation by the assembly from which the minister comes, provided that the sending and receiving assemblies are both following the guidelines of this *Credentials Manual*. If different guidelines are being followed, further investigation may be necessary before approval can take place. See section 5.00.

2. If there was a pending investigation or a call for possible disciplinary action before the minister moved, that minister should first receive clearance and approval by the sending credentialing body before seeking approval by the receiving assembly.

C. Church of God Ministries will proceed to register on the following basis:

1. If a registered minister moves after the approved lists have been returned to Church of God Ministries and too late to be approved by the new credentialing committee, that minister will be registered on the basis of approval by the original assembly.

2. If a serious problem is reported by the sending assembly or credentialing committee, that minister will not be registered by the receiving assembly until the matter has been resolved.

**4.22 The Expected Congregational Attributes.** Congregational status in regard to the fifteen expected attributes of a congregation associated with the Church of God movement (identified in section 6.11) will be used by the credentialing committee in evaluation of the annual certification of congregations in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God. In addition, the credentialing committee will evaluate a congregation as to its due diligence in following policies related to the screening and supervising of all volunteers and employed staff, and in having procedures in place to be followed if allegations of improper conduct occur.

Any congregation that conforms in intent and usual practice to this model may be recognized as a Church of God congregation (with general offices in Anderson, Indiana) and approved for listing in the annual *Yearbook* of the Church of God.

#### **4.30 Responsibilities of the Individual Minister and the Congregation**

**4.31 Initiative for Participation and Registration.** In order to foster fellowship and accountability with the Church of God movement, each minister is expected to attend regular meetings of ministerial colleagues, as defined by the appropriate state/regional assembly, and to register annually.

The initiative for the annual registration is the responsibility of the individual minister and congregation. All eligible ministers and congregations will be informed of the process, procedures, and deadlines. Ministers or congregations that do not receive this information should contact Church of God Ministries.

Ministers who fail for two consecutive years to honor this covenant relationship of participation and registration are subject to the suspension of their ministerial credentials for six (6) months. Unless such suspension is successfully appealed, those credentials will be revoked.

**4.32 The Required Date.** Registration must be completed by the stated deadlines. Failure to do so may result in the minister's name not appearing in the next *Yearbook* issue. Approval for appearing in the *Yearbook* listing is dependent on concurrence of the minister's state/area/provincial assembly. It is, therefore, the minister's responsibility to insure that all requirements have been met.

**4.33 Moving During the Registration Period.** The minister who moves during the time of *Yearbook* registration should take the initiative to inform the credentialing committee of the assembly being left so that proper recommendation can occur.

**4.34 The Right of Appeal.** If refused approval, the ministerial applicant shall have the right of appeal. In the event that a person is not approved for *Yearbook* listing, Church of God Ministries will make a reasonable attempt to notify that person promptly and to advise the minister to contact the credentialing committee of the appropriate assembly to discuss the possibility of the decision being reversed. In the event that the approved list is returned too late to allow for the appeal process, a representative of Church of God

Ministries may confer with the assembly credentialing chair to determine the applicant's eligibility for registration, and only then approve a name previously identified as not approved.

**4.35 Yearbook Title Codes.** Each person registering for the *Yearbook* of the Church of God may select from the established list of codes the designation that *best* describes that person's primary ministerial status. Only those persons whose ministries conform to one of the listed designations should apply for *Yearbook* listing. Others are likely to be denied approval. The current designations of ministry categories (codes) and their definitions are maintained by Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) and are used in a uniform way by all credentialing jurisdictions.

#### **4.40 Responsibilities of Specialized Ministers and Specialized Ministry Groups**

**4.41 Specialized Ministers.** Some ministers are engaged in specialized ministries in which they cannot be a part of the active life of any assembly of the Church of God movement. Church of God Ministries must accept responsibility in such special cases. Examples:

**A. Military Chaplains.** These persons are routinely moved to all parts of the world.

**B. Institutional Chaplains.** Church of God Ministries endorses institutional chaplains who often are so involved that they cannot get to assembly meetings regularly; their accountability, however, is still the responsibility of the appropriate assembly.

**C. Isolated Ministers.** Some ministers are located in isolated geographic areas or taking advanced training where participating regularly in the life of the appropriate assembly is not possible.

**D. Other Ministers.** Some ministers who serve outside of North America or are employed by Church of God Ministries in Anderson, Indiana, will have their credentials maintained by Indiana Ministries, as arranged by Church of God Ministries.

**4.42 Specialized Ministry Groups.** A person or specialized ministry group wishing to be listed in the *Yearbook* in the Directory of Organizations must be approved annually by the credentialing body with jurisdiction where the home office of the ministry is located. The minister or group shall supply needed information and appear for interviews as requested. The appropriate credentialing committee shall certify that each free-standing ministry seeking *Yearbook* listing meets the following conditions:

**A.** Is engaged in genuine Christian ministry;

**B.** Is led by persons clearly identified with the Church of God movement;

C. Maintains harmonious working relationships with the ministries of the Church of God movement related to its area of ministry service; and

D. Presents annually to the certifying assembly detailed financial statements showing solvency and responsibility.

#### **4.50 Failure of Ministers or Congregations to Register**

##### **4.51 Ministers Not Registering**

The failure (except for acceptable extenuating circumstances) of a minister to register for the *Yearbook* of the Church of God for two or more consecutive years will constitute grounds for removal of that minister's name from the approved and published list. Reinstatement must come through proper application by the minister to the appropriate credentialing committee, giving acceptable reasons for failure to register. A minister who, over a period of two years, demonstrates no interest in being part of the fellowship or ministry, either of a local Church of God congregation or of some expression of the church-at-work within the area, will not be registered and should have Church of God credentials revoked unless it can be shown that there is substantial reason why credentials should be retained.

##### **4.52 Congregations Not Registering**

Because of legal statutes applicable to not-for-profit organizations, it is essential that congregations register annually with their assemblies and with Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, for proper listing in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God. Failure to register for two consecutive years may result in the loss of a congregation's 501(c)3 status. If this loss occurs, the congregation is no longer eligible to submit contribution reports for IRS purposes.

## **Section 5.00**

### **WHEN MINISTERS MOVE FROM ONE ASSEMBLY TO ANOTHER**

#### **Contents of This Section**

- 5.10 Accountability for Inter-Assembly Transfers**
- 5.20 Policy Objectives**
- 5.30 Implementation Procedures**
  - 5.31 Responsibilities of the Minister When Transferring to the Jurisdiction of Another Assembly**
  - 5.32 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee When a Minister Is Moving**
  - 5.33 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee to the Congregation Whose Pastor Is Moving**
  - 5.34 Responsibilities of the Congregation When the Position of Pastor Becomes Vacant**

## SECTION 5.00

### **WHEN MINISTERS MOVE FROM ONE ASSEMBLY TO ANOTHER**

#### **5.10 Accountability for Inter-Assembly Transfers**

Because Church of God ministers move frequently from one credentialing jurisdiction to another—and on occasion leave behind unenviable records and reputations, it is necessary to provide for an orderly tracking of the migration of all ministers. The Inter-Assembly Transfer is the means used. An Inter-Assembly Transfer provides vital information to the receiving assembly.

Each minister is accountable to the assembly with jurisdiction in the area within which that minister serves. Accountability to the church cannot be escaped merely by moving from one credentialing jurisdiction to another. This accountability is protected through the use of Inter-Assembly Transfers. When transferring, the minister's original professional file, with limitations (see section 5.32), is to be forwarded to the new assembly, along with the Inter-Assembly Transfer form.

#### **5.20 Policy Objectives**

The three reasons for a stated policy that regulates inter-assembly transfers are:

- A. To aid pastors and congregations in making smooth transitions.
- B. To involve assembly administrators and credentialing committees in the process of filling vacant pastoral positions.
- C. To control the flow of disruptive ministers from one assembly to another without proper awareness of the receiving assembly. See section 7.43.

#### **5.30 Implementation Procedures**

##### **5.31 Responsibilities of the Minister When Transferring to the Jurisdiction of Another Assembly**

- A. When deciding to leave the jurisdiction of an assembly, the minister will immediately request the credentialing committee to send an Inter-Assembly Transfer to the receiving credentialing committee.

**B.** When leaving an educational institution, the student minister will have the institution send a Student Recommendation Form to the receiving assembly as one of the prerequisites for licensing.

**C.** Compliance with these procedures will be a part of the requirements for the continued listing of ministers in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God.

### **5.32 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee When a Minister Is Moving**

**A.** When a minister planning to move requests that an Inter-Assembly Transfer be sent to the receiving credentialing committee, the sending assembly must forward this form within 30 days of notification.

**B.** If the Release of Information Form is not already properly signed and included as part of the transferring minister's professional file, the file will not be sent. Should the minister refuse, a report of the refusal shall be shared in writing with the chair of the credentialing committee of the receiving assembly.

**C.** With the signed Release of Information Form included (a copy retained by the sending committee), the entire professional file of the transferring minister is to be forwarded to the chair of the receiving credentialing committee, except for any confidential materials related to problems of the past that have been fully resolved to the satisfaction of the credentialing committee. If copies of such materials are retained by the credentialing committee in the jurisdiction the minister is moving from, they will be held in keeping with the guidelines in subsection 7.36C. A report of the existence and general nature of such past issues, however, shall be included for the information of the receiving assembly.

**D.** Sending assemblies may maintain a copy file if it contains information related to any proceedings and charges against the transferring minister that occurred while in its jurisdiction.

### **5.33 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee to the Congregation Whose Pastor Is Moving**

**A.** Each assembly is urged to develop and implement a covenant with each congregation in its jurisdiction, thus assuring that congregations understand their responsibility to work with the assembly office in selecting a pastor.

**B.** Each assembly is urged to develop a packet of resources to make available to covenanted congregations to assist them in finding new pastors.

**C.** When learning that a congregation is without a pastor, the regional pastor/overseer, state/assembly office, or, when neither is available, the assembly's credentialing committee chair will contact the congregation concerning:

- The desire to have the congregation involve the assembly office or credentialing committee in the pastoral selection process;
- The need to be cautious about calling an unapproved pastor; and
- Any perceived issues involving the congregation that might hinder its being pastored successfully.

**5.34 Responsibilities of the Congregation When the Position of Pastor Becomes Vacant**

- A. To notify assembly leadership of a pastoral opening and search.
- B. To involve the assembly's office or credentialing committee in the pastoral selection process.
- C. To be aware of the need for Ministerial Inter-Assembly Transfers.
- D. To be cautious about calling an unapproved pastor.

It is to be understood that compliance with these responsibilities will be a part of the requirements for continued listing of churches in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God.

## **Section 6.00**

### **RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION OF CONGREGATIONS**

#### **Contents of this Section**

- 6.10 Recognition and Certification of Established Congregations**
  - 6.11 Expected Attributes of a Church of God Congregation
  - 6.12 Policy Regarding a Non-Conforming Congregation
- 6.20 Recognition and Certification of New Congregations**
  - 6.21 When a New Congregation Results from the Fracturing of an Existing Congregation
  - 6.22 Provisional Status: Standards and Procedures for New Congregations Resulting from a Church Fracture
  - 6.23 Provisional Status: Standards and Procedures for New Congregations Resulting from a Church Planting Strategy
- 6.30 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee in Potential Church Mergers**
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## Section 6.00

### **RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION OF CONGREGATIONS**

#### **6.10 Recognition and Certification of Established Congregations**

##### **6.11 Expected Aspirations of a Church of God Congregation**

An established congregation of the Church of God movement should be characterized by the following attributes. An established congregation. . .

- A.** Is a nurturing local body of believers providing fellowship, inspiration, and support to all within its reach.
- B.** Is obedient to God's call to mission at home and around the world.
- C.** Provides opportunity for growing in Christian grace and equipping for service.
- D.** Lives in harmony with the doctrines and teachings of the Word of God as commonly understood by the teaching heritage of the Church of God movement. For definition of this heritage, see the recommended readings listed in section 2.13.
- E.** Upholds a lifestyle characterized by holiness, service, and wise stewardship, as taught by the Bible and consistent with established practices of the Church of God movement.
- F.** Is involved in area, district, state, and national ministries of the Church of God movement, including such joint activities as worship, training, recreation, and mission projects.
- G.** Endeavors to live peaceably as pastors and members with one another and their neighbors.
- H.** Is supportive, respectful, and nurturing of all deserving overseers, including its pastor(s) and duly elected leaders.
- I.** By both prayer and financial support, contributes to the world mission of the church through the cooperative ministries of the Church of God movement.

- J.** Registers annually for the *Yearbook* of the Church of God and otherwise intentionally links itself to the life of the Church of God movement.
- K.** Invites the counsel of the state office, area assembly's credentialing committee, regional pastor/overseer, and/or Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, during times of pastoral change or congregational conflict.
- L.** Abides by the procedures for calling a new pastor as outlined in the section of this *Credentials Manual* titled "When Ministers Move..." (see section 5.00).
- M.** Is governed by the Holy Spirit, giving decisional authority to pastors and lay leaders as one way to allow Christ preeminence in all things.
- N.** Calls and retains on a long-term basis only senior pastors who are approved or likely to gain approval by the assembly under whose jurisdiction that pastor resides.
- O.** Maintains in its articles of incorporation a conditional deeding clause, with the beneficiary being the appropriate state, provincial, or area organization of the Church of God (Anderson).
- P.** Restricts the use of all properties owned from any event or program at odds with the mission or teachings with the Church of God movement (Anderson, IN), represented formally by the actions of the movement's General Assembly in North America. This includes facility use for same-sex marriage ceremonies. (See *Credentials Manual* supplemental resource, "Restriction on use of facilities", for sample wording for a facilities restriction clause in by-laws and articles of incorporation.)

Any congregation that conforms in intent and usual practice to the above attributes may be recognized as a congregation of the Church of God movement (with general offices in Anderson, Indiana) and approved for listing in the annual *Yearbook* of the Church of God.

## **6.12 Policy Regarding a Non-Conforming Congregation**

Congregations that do not satisfactorily conform to the set of attributes described in section 6.11 should not be prematurely disfellowshipped. While nothing excuses gross departures from standards that cannot be compromised, particular circumstances may encourage the credentialing committee to be patient and accepting so long as the practices do not expose the congregation or the church at large to public disgrace or unnecessary legal liability.

In cases where congregations have clearly violated standards and practices widely embraced by the Church of God movement, the credentialing committee must initiate attempts to find satisfactory resolution of the conflict. Such attempts will be guided by the material found in section 7.00.

## **6.20 Recognition and Certification of New Congregations**

### **6.21 When a New Congregation Results from the Fracturing of an Existing Congregation**

In cases where a new congregation results from a fracture, whether or not the credentialing committee was involved in attempts to resolve the conflict, the credentialing committee shall pursue the following courses of action.

- A. As opportunity is provided, counsel with both congregations. Attempt to dissolve animosity between the congregations and between individuals within the congregations.
- B. Promote healing of spiritual and emotional wounds.
- C. Encourage the exercise of love in each congregation and between the congregations.
- D. Discourage attempts by either congregation to proselytize constituents of the other.
- E. Enable each congregation to focus on its unique mission and opportunities; foster forward thinking in both congregations.
- F. Review the certification of the recognized congregation.
- G. Consider, on request, the potential certification of the new congregation.

In determining whether or not to certify the new congregation, the credentialing committee shall take into consideration such factors as these:

- A. Is there evidence of a conciliatory and forgiving attitude toward persons affiliated with the existing congregation?
- B. Is there a stated desire to be supportive of the teachings, practices, structures, and mission of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana)?
- C. Is there likelihood of the new group becoming a viable congregation?

### **6.22 Provisional Status: Standards and Procedures for New Congregations Resulting from a Church Fracture**

New congregations that give serious evidence of positive stances in regard to the above three questions may be granted provisional status. Under provisional status the credentialing committee takes these actions:

- A. Approves the congregation for listing in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God,

but with an asterisk (as is the case with approved but unordained ministers);

- B. Provides counsel and support, including assistance in securing a pastor or supply preachers;
- C. Reviews periodically the congregation's progress to see whether or not the provisional status should be lifted and full certification granted. In no case shall full certification be granted before at least two years have elapsed from the time that provisional status was first granted.

Under provisional status, the new congregation agrees to take these actions:

- A. With the assistance of the assembly and its credentialing committee, sincerely address its difficulties and opportunities;
- B. Work cooperatively with the state or provincial office or assembly's credentialing committee, especially in such matters as calling a pastor and supply preachers, financial contracts, geographical location, and plans for facilities;
- C. Clearly establish its identity as a Church of God congregation (see section 6.11).

### **6.23 Provisional Status: Standards and Procedures for New Congregations Resulting from Church Planting**

When a new congregation results from the careful and deliberate church planting strategy of the assembly, it automatically will be granted provisional status. Under such provisional status the credentialing committee takes these actions:

- A. Approves the congregation for listing in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God, but with an asterisk.
- B. Provides counsel, as requested by the assembly or one of its boards or committees, and support, including assistance in securing a pastor or supply preachers.
- C. Reviews periodically, on behalf of the assembly or one of its boards or committees, the congregation's provisional status and, at such time as deemed appropriate, grants full certification.

Under such provisional status, the new congregation agrees to take these actions:

- A. Works cooperatively with the credentialing committee, especially in such matters as calling a pastor and supply preachers.

- B. Seeks to conform to the norms set forth for all Church of God congregations (see section 6.11).

### **6.30 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee in Potential Church Mergers**

When the possibility exists that a new congregation may result from the merger of two or more Church of God congregations, or from the merger of a Church of God congregation with that of another religious body, the credentialing committee shall be involved in the following ways:

- A. Planning events in which common faith and values can be honestly and intensely explored.
- B. Confessing, studying, and evaluating differences.
- C. Considering all available options.
- D. Participating in the process of establishing the conditions of the merger.
- E. Determining whether or not to certify the new congregation, taking into consideration such factors as:
  - Circumstances prompting the merger.
  - Authorized bodies endorsing the merger.
  - Impact on nearby Church of God congregations.
  - Compatibility of the merged congregation with the teachings, practices, structure, and mission of the Church of God movement.
  - Degree to which both bodies involved cooperated with the credentialing committee throughout the merger process.

Based on the status of the above factors, the credentialing committee may elect to take one of the following actions:

1. Grant the new congregation full certification;
  2. Grant the new congregation provisional status; or
  3. Not approve the new congregation.
- F. If the merger has been approved, celebrating in the consummation of the merger.

### **6.40 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee When a Congregation Desires to Newly Affiliate with the Church of God Movement**

When a congregation not previously affiliated with the Church of God movement indicates a desire to affiliate, the appropriate credentialing committee shall be involved in the following ways:

- A. Serving as the official liaison for the Church of God movement.
- B. Investigating reasons prompting the desired affiliation.
- C. Evaluating the impact on nearby Church of God congregations.
- D. Testing the compatibility of said congregation with the teachings, practices, structure, and mission of the Church of God movement.
- E. Maintaining fraternal relationships with the communion of which said congregation has been a part.
- F. Assessing the ability, spirit, and stance of pastoral and lay leadership of said congregation.

Based on the above factors, the credentialing committee may decide to take one of the following actions:

- Grant the new congregation full certification;
- Grant the new congregation provisional status; or
- Not approve the new congregation.

## **6.50 Issues Related to a New Church Plant When a Mother Church Is Involved in the Formation of the New Group**

### **6.51 Questions Addressed**

When a new congregation is planted through the direct involvement of a Church of God congregation, the credentialing committee should address the following questions:

- Were problems with or within the mother church a major factor in the decision?
- Was vision for reaching new people for Christ the primary reason in forming a new group?
- Is the location for the new church already being served by another Church of God congregation(s)?
- Is there a vision of the new group shared with the mother church's leaders, and has the vision been taken to the congregation as a whole to seek its blessing, participation, and support?

### **6.52 Policies and Procedures To Be Followed**

The credentialing committee shall follow these policies and procedures:

- A. Seek general agreement between the church plant and the mother church regarding the procedure of this undertaking.
- B. Make contact with congregational leaders in the area which may be affected by the location of the new work to help insure a better future relationship.
- C. Seek and give due consideration to the advice of district and/or state leadership.
- D. Anticipate the financial needs of both the mother church and the new work. Have in place a financial plan for launch-time and for continuing support.
- E. Before the actual launch of the new work:
  - Insure that some organizational structure within the new group is in place.
  - If key leaders from the mother church are going with the new work, give time and opportunity for these leaders to be replaced.
  - At the mother church, share public announcement of the launch date, even though there may be some with mixed feelings about the new church plant.
  - The mother church and other congregations should be given the opportunity to send persons to assist the new work for a period of time to help with key areas of ministry, if needed. It is understood that such individuals may return to their mother church at the end of that period.
- F. On the launch Sunday:
  - Acknowledge the support given by the mother church and surrounding congregations.
  - If possible, representatives of the mother church and other congregations should be invited to be present in the first service of the new work.
- G. Build for long-term relationships by:
  - Exchanging plans and/or ideas as to how all groups involved may have a part in building positive and lasting relationships.
  - Working toward having a larger majority of all the involved parties participating in the planting of a new church.

## **Section 7.00**

# **MAINTENANCE OF CREDENTIALS AND CERTIFICATION FOR MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS**

### **Contents of This Section**

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  - 7.11 Review the Calling and Accountability of Ordained Ministers**
  - 7.12 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee in Conducting the Review**
- 7.20 The Right of Congregational Intervention**
- 7.30 Counseling and Disciplining Ministers**
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## SECTION 7.00

### MAINTENANCE OF CREDENTIALS AND CERTIFICATION FOR MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

#### 7.10 Continuing the Credentialing of Ordained Ministers

##### 7.11 Updating the Calling and Accountability of Ordained Ministers

An official update of the calling and accountability for each ordained minister in the Church of God movement should be undertaken regularly. There should be a determination as to whether the ministerial call and commitment of the ordained minister remain current. Appropriate currency is to be measured in part by participation and reporting expectations fulfilled, namely:

1. Every state/region will require attendance of ministers at a particular percentage of annual state/region ministerial meetings on an annual basis.
2. Every state/regional assembly should require a yearly registration of pastor and congregation to be approved by state/regional general assembly. Failure of ordained ministers to register for two consecutive years will result in credentials being suspended for 6 (six) months; if no contact is made, credentials are revoked. Reinstatement at all levels requires a plan tailored to the individual and situation. Ministers who are licensed or commissioned will not have credentials renewed.
3. Ministers are to be informed of their responsibility to contact the appropriate state/regional assembly and register annually, and of the repercussions of not maintaining proper contact and registration. Additionally, ministers are required to notify the credentialing body of their transfer to another assembly within thirty (30) days of moving into the jurisdiction of that other assembly.

##### 7.12 Responsibilities of the Credentials Committee in Conducting the Update

**A. Purpose:** The periodic updating process is not a time of performance review. It is to determine whether the sense of calling and commitment remain current, and whether there is active accountability and appropriate relationship to the standards and expectations of ministers of the Church of God movement.

**B. Means:** The frequency and specific way of carrying out this update should be determined by each credentialing body.

**C. Schedule:** This update should be conducted regularly by the credentialing body to which each ordained minister is accountable. Reaffirmation of the ordination will occur every five (5) years.

**D. Record-keeping:** Documentation of these periodic updates and their results should be retained in each minister's personal file. See section 3.10.

## **7.20 The Right of Congregational Intervention**

The credentialing committee may intervene in congregational life and/or pastoral vocation for purposes of consultation, counsel, and/or discipline when circumstances appear to warrant, especially when such intervention is requested in writing by a recognized authority of the congregation. Such authorities include:

- A. Pastor or pastoral staff.
- B. Governing board of the congregation.
- C. A petitioned request as provided for in congregational bylaws.

Additionally, the credentialing committee may seek intervention at its own initiative when it becomes aware that a congregation and/or pastor substantially deviates from accepted practices or standards of the Church of God movement, or when the congregation or pastor is at risk and no intervention request is forthcoming. Strict congregational autonomy, when it functions without regard to consequences to the larger church, is not part of the teaching ideal of the Church of God movement. Credentialing committees will investigate and make recommendations to the congregational staff and leadership.

## **7.30 Counseling and Disciplining Ministers**

The following guidelines are established to aid credentialing committees in addressing circumstances where counseling or discipline is required, and in resolving the traumas that such circumstances typically create.

### **7.31 Ministerial Actions Requiring Discipline**

For at least the following reasons, a minister will be subject to counsel and/or discipline on the recommendation of the appropriate credentialing committee:

- A. Demonstrated incompetence, lacking the qualities, skills, and/or character to perform the tasks of Christian ministry.
- B. Sexual misconduct, whether with the same or opposite sex. For the purposes of this *Manual*, sexual misconduct is defined as follows:

**Sexual Misconduct.** Sexual misconduct is considered to be any inappropriate touching and/or fondling of the erogenous zones; inappropriate hugging or kissing; sexual intercourse; making implicit or

explicit suggestions of sexual activity; asking for sexual favors; or exposing the genital areas. Homosexuality, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and pornography of all kinds, whether in person or through electronic media, are considered sexual misconduct. Formal statements by the General Assembly of the Church of God on homosexuality are found in Barry Callen's book *Following the Light* (Warner Press, 2000), pages 249-250 and 260-261.

**Sexual Harassment.** Harassment involves a wide range of behaviors including, but not limited to, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual, provocative, or intimidating nature.

**C.** Mismanagement of finances, one's own or those of the congregation, so as to incur bad debts or otherwise bring discredit to the ministry and/or the church.

**D.** Failure to maintain biblical expectations of family relationships (see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). Domestic violence against spouse or children is misconduct and subject to discipline.

**E.** Disruptive behavioral patterns injurious to the internal unity of the congregation served. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, gossip, breaking of confidences, a pattern of causing conflict, uncontrolled temper, and verbal and religious abuse.

**F.** Promulgating or espousing teaching and practice contrary to the Word of God as commonly understood by the Church of God movement (see section 2.13). This includes the performing of same-sex marriage ceremonies and the offering of church facilities for such ceremonies.

**G.** Unethical behavior, including any conduct unbecoming to the professional ministry (e.g., misrepresentation, fraud, conflict of interest, using the church and its resources for personal gain, and betrayal of confidence).

**H.** Failure to submit to recognized authority, whether that of the Holy Spirit, the duly elected leaders of the congregation, or the area assembly and its credentialing committee.

**I.** Failure to respond to an invitation to meet with the credentialing committee with jurisdiction in the area of that minister's current service.

**J.** Failure to maintain supporting ties with the Church of God movement whenever possible on a local level, as well as with state, district, provincial, or national assemblies. Supporting ties include, but are not limited to, attendance at regular meetings and fellowship, and leading the congregation in financial support of the budget and/or mission.

**K.** Failure to maintain registration in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God.

**L.** Failure to be engaged in career ministry (does not apply to retirees or the disabled).

**M.** Failure to report known misconduct of another minister.

**7.32 Investigation of a Charge of Ethical/Moral/Doctrinal/Professional Failure:  
Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee**

When aware that any of the above (section 7.31) or equally serious conditions may exist, the credentialing committee is expected to initiate investigation, disposition, notification, and the keeping of reports and other records.

All reports of clergy ethical, moral, doctrinal, or professional failure will be diligently investigated by the credentialing committee and/or its appointed representatives, and documented in writing. Ascertaining the truth and arriving at appropriate resolutions in such cases may require the assistance of professional experts to investigate charges and recommend appropriate resolutions.

**A.** In responding to a report of alleged clergy failure, the credentialing committee shall:

- Notify the minister involved of the allegation;
- Conduct a preliminary review to determine whether a thorough investigation appears justified; and,
- As a first step in this review, ask the complainant to write and sign a detailed statement of the allegation.

**B.** If the allegation appears to warrant, the credentialing committee then will appoint an investigative committee (membership detailed in section 7.33.1) which shall work under the direction of the credentialing committee.

**C.** The continuation of the investigation and subsequent conclusions and actions are the responsibility of the credentialing committee, based in large part, but not entirely, on the results of the work of the investigative committee.

**D.** Once it is determined that a formal investigation is warranted, all documents associated with the allegation and investigation are to become part of the minister's professional file (see section 3.10).

**E.** If any person or committee related to the credentialing committee has reason at any time to suspect that the alleged offense involves the sexual or other abuse of a minor, or any other reportable criminal activity, proper authorities shall be notified immediately, as required by local law.

**F.** Following are the guiding principles for the credentialing committee to follow in the investigative process:

1. The person(s) making the allegation and the minister being accused will be treated with care, respect, and dignity.
2. Each charge will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.
3. In the case of sexual behavior, the requirements of local law will be complied with immediately. The confidentiality of the person(s) making the allegation will be maintained, as requested and appropriate. Permission to share the identity of the complainant with any person or committee must be obtained in writing from the complainant. The complainant's name should be included in written records only as necessary to the investigative process and to document charges. Such records must be safeguarded and kept confidential by the credentialing and investigative committees. However, a primary concern will be for the welfare of an apparent victim(s) and protection of other potential victims. This concern, however, is always to be balanced with the legitimate needs and rights of the accused minister.
4. In the case of non-sexual behavior, Matthew 18:15–17 will be the governing authority of the investigative process, both in spirit and in detail.

**G.** It is vital that, in the investigative process, the credentialing committee deal carefully with and focus on the facts as they become known.

**H.** The credentialing committee will hold as primary objectives: (a) the redemption and restoration of all parties involved; (b) the integrity of the ministry; and (c) the well-being of the minister's congregation, family, and any other affected parties.

### **7.33 Policies and Procedures for the Investigative Committee**

The investigative committee shall consist of at least two persons, with no member having a conflict of interest with any of the parties or issues involved. It shall function as follows:

**A.** Ask the complainant to write and sign a detailed statement of the circumstances of the alleged inappropriate attitude(s) or action(s), including but not necessarily limited to dates, locations, and the exact nature of the concern;

**B.** Meet with the complainant to review the statement and receive additional testimony, including permission to share the written statement and complainant's name with the minister involved. Such a statement should be insisted on unless there appears to be the threat of physical harm to the complainant;

**C.** Share with the minister involved the written statement of allegation, seeking whatever response the minister wishes to give and the intent to pursue further investigation—if no permission to share the statement was received from the complainant, share at least its general nature, without revealing the complainant's name;

**D.** Seek corroborative information, with the consent of the complainant or by discreet means, with or without identification of the complainant, as appropriate;

**E.** Interview witnesses as may be helpful to the investigation (any written statements and other documents from these witnesses shall become part of the investigation's record and minister's professional file once a formal investigation has been judged warranted and has begun);

**F.** Prepare a written summary of all proceedings, including any recommendations for action by the credentialing committee. Any subsequent action taken by the credentialing committee that involves the status of the minister's credentials should be forwarded immediately in writing to Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana).

**G.** If the investigation indicates the apparent innocence of the accused minister, the investigative committee shall take these actions:

1. Express such judgment as a part of the investigation's records, and, if appropriate, recommend that the credentialing committee consider making a similar public statement if the matter has become public;
2. Reprimand the false accuser and suggest counseling or other future action appropriate to the circumstance.

**H.** Should the investigative committee find that the minister's behavior or attitudes have not been unethical, but nonetheless have been inappropriate and/or unwise, the investigative committee shall take these actions:

1. Recommend to the credentialing committee that an official warning or censure be issued. A warning or censure shall include a recommended change of behavior or attitude and/or a prescription for treatment.
2. Prepare a written summary of all proceedings, including any recommendations for action by the credentialing committee. A written record of any such action should be forwarded immediately in writing to Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana).

**I.** If the investigative committee discovers sufficient information to suggest that ethical or moral failure has occurred, the investigative committee shall take these actions:

1. Inform the accused minister of the investigative committee's conclusions and request the minister to prepare a written response of appeal, if desired;
2. Meet with the minister to receive any such appeal. The accused may invite an ordained Church of God minister to serve as an advisor/advocate during this meeting and for the ensuing process;
3. Prepare a written report of said meeting, to be given to the accused minister, who may then respond in writing to the investigative committee for the official record;
4. Prepare a written summary of all proceedings, including recommendations for action by the credentialing committee. A written record of any such action should be forwarded immediately in writing to Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana).

#### **7.34 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee in the Disposition of Substantiated Cases of Clergy Ethical/Moral/Doctrinal/Professional Failure**

When charges of clergy ethical/moral/doctrinal/professional failure have been substantiated, it shall be the responsibility of the credentialing committee to determine the status of the minister's credentials and, through its appropriate committees, to assure, to the extent possible, (1) the immediate cessation of the misconduct and (2) the integrity of the Christian ministry. It also shall prescribe a process for the discipline and rehabilitation of the minister that protects the well being of spouse and family, church members and/or clients, and addresses directly the needed healing of the minister and the minister's family and congregation. Further, if the discipline and rehabilitation of the minister creates the need for temporary leadership in the affected congregation, the committee should stand ready to help the congregation identify a supply preacher.

#### **7.35 Courses of Action for the Credentialing Committee When Dealing with a Minister Whose Ethical/Moral/Doctrinal/Professional Failure Has Been Substantiated**

**A. Warning.** Issue an official communication in writing to the minister (to be sent by registered mail that requires a signature of receipt) indicating that the investigative committee has determined that inappropriate or unwise behavior has occurred. A program of rehabilitative and remedial action may be suggested, as well as a change in behavior. A copy of the minister's signed release of information form must be included with this official communication.

**B. Censure.** Issue to the minister an official statement of disapproval of an attitude and/or behavior. This is a stern warning, indicating that further or similar conduct is unacceptable and could lead to suspension or termination of the

person's authorization for ministry. Censure will be accompanied by a program for required rehabilitative and remedial action, such as counseling and supervision for a specified period. Failure to comply with the prescribed program will result in suspension or termination of the person's authorization for ministry. A copy of the release form signed by pastor, counselor, and a witness shall be sent with the censure.

**C. Suspension of Standing.** The credentialing committee may rescind the privilege of authorization to minister in the Church of God movement for a specified period. While this does not permanently remove the ministerial authorization, during suspension the person cannot perform the functions of professional ministry. The suspension should state clearly for what period of time it is in effect and specify the conditions of the suspension. The purpose of a suspension is to underscore the seriousness of the offense and to provide opportunity for a program of rehabilitation as prescribed by the credentialing committee. Failure of the minister to successfully comply with the prescribed program will result in termination of credentials for ministry.

**D. Revocation of Credentials.** Because of the judged gravity of the situation, the credentialing committee may choose to revoke the person's credentials for ministry. This revocation terminates the person's authorization to minister in the Church of God movement. If the credentialing committee chooses to revoke the minister's credentials, it shall seek the signed assent of the minister whenever such is possible.

**E. Voluntary Termination.** In the case where an accused minister voluntarily surrenders ministerial credentials rather than facing a warning, censure, suspension, or revocation, the credentialing committee nonetheless will proceed to investigate thoroughly and, for the record, develop and file a summary report of its findings.

### **7.36 Reports, Records, and Notification of Actions Taken**

**A. Notification of Agencies.** If a minister is formally warned or censured, or the minister's authorization for ministry is suspended or terminated, such action must be reported to Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana). The credentialing committee chair will see that all written reports are forwarded to Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) for appropriate distribution. In cases of warning and censure, notifications will be reported to Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana. In the case of the suspension, termination, or voluntary surrendering of ministerial credentials, notifications will be reported to Church of God Ministries. This information will be posted on the Regional Pastors and Overseers website. Where appropriate, notification will be given to the minister's employers and professional and certifying organizations and associations.

**B. Notification of Complainant(s).** The credentialing committee will provide a written report to the complainant(s) involved, summarizing the decisions, actions, and disposition of the case.

**C. Reports and Records of the Discipline Process.** In dealing with a minister and/or congregation, all committees are to keep detailed written records of their deliberations and the reasons for their conclusions and recommended courses of action. All written reports of the committees should be composed with sensitivity, recognizing potential legal implications and wanting to be fair and redemptive.

All documents, including but not limited to notarized statements, psychological assessments, minutes of meetings, interview summaries, reports, and correspondence related to the case, shall be considered confidential, shall be the sole property of the appropriate credentialing committee, and shall be kept in a secure file as outlined by state law. All copies of all materials are to be destroyed; all retained materials are to be stamped “confidential.”

#### **7.40 Restoration of Ministers**

The suspension, termination, or voluntary surrendering of ministerial credentials may not be final in every case. It is understood, however, that there may be certain failures of behavior and/or character that preclude partial or full restoration to leadership in vocational Christian ministry. It also is understood that there are important distinctions to be made between restoring to faith, restoring to fellowship, and restoring to leadership.

Genuine repentance of sin restores the one repenting to the joy of faith and the benefits of the grace of God. In this sense, restoration to faith is restoration to Christ. When relationships are healed and community renewed, then restoration to fellowship can be attained. In this sense, restoration to fellowship is restoration to function within the Body of Christ. Restoration to faith and fellowship, however, is not a guarantee of restoration to leadership. While the credentialing committee may grant restoration to leadership, only a congregation may issue the actual call to leadership.

#### **7.41 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee in Determining If Restoration Is Possible, and If So, the Process and Timeline to Be Followed**

The roles of a credentialing committee include working with an attitude of encouraging and, when necessary, restoring (see section 1.12). The credentialing committee shall have the responsibility of determining whether or not the restoration of a fallen minister to leadership is possible. If the committee determines that restoration to leadership may be possible, it shall establish a length of supervised accountability of not less than two (2) years. Based on the type and severity of the failure, the credentialing committee may determine that three or more years of supervised accountability are necessary to assure attainment of adequate healing and recovery. In every case, the credentialing committee has the responsibility for determining the process and steps of the restoration of ministerial credentials. The

usual steps are as follows.

**A. Confession.** Sin is rarely a victimless act. Often the life of the local congregation and that of the church at large are damaged. A primary step in the restoration process is acknowledging the transgression. Because the very act of confession could itself extend the problem, careful steps must be taken to confess the wrong with discretion and sensitivity, and only in an appropriate setting. One manifestation of genuine confession is found in the attitude of the one confessing. It should be marked by several distinguishing characteristics:

1. Acknowledging the sin in a spontaneous manner;
2. Confessing the sin in a repentant manner;
3. Accepting responsibility for one's actions;
4. Declining to shift blame to other parties; and
5. Placing no conditions on the outcome of the confession.

The confession may be offered originally in a private manner to a trusted colleague or appropriate other person, a person who possesses the gifts of wisdom and compassion. Restoration to leadership, however, may require a more formal and perhaps even public confession. Although public confession is sometimes essential, not every public setting is appropriate for detailed confession. The credentialing committee or supervising minister should offer guidance in this matter.

**B. Repentance.** Confession is virtually meaningless without repentance. Because of the public life of the ordained minister, both the confession and expressions of repentance should address those individuals, families, congregations, and/or communities damaged by the sin. Beyond the spoken words, legitimate and authentic repentance ultimately will issue in overt and obvious changes in attitudes and behavior. Despite God's grace, restoration is a costly process.

**C. Forgiveness.** According to the biblical principle regarding genuine confession and repentance, it is incumbent on those wronged to forgive and be open to renewed fellowship. Failure to do so would be contrary to the teaching of scripture, thus turning the offender into the offended.

**D. Restitution.** Restoration may include acts of restitution as may be required by the credentialing committee, including public confession and repayment if and when it is deemed appropriate.

**E. Cleansing.** While it is said that "time heals all wounds," in many instances time can best provide healing only if counseling and other therapeutic processes are applied. Professional counseling may be prescribed as a condition for restoration. In this instance, the recovering minister will be required to withdraw from positions of leadership throughout the recovery period. The offending minister will be accountable to a supervising minister assigned by the

credentialing committee, and may be directed to worship in a setting other than the one where the wrong was committed. The supervising minister will report periodically to the credentialing committee.

**F. Reinstatement.** If and when the minister meets all of the above conditions and desires reinstatement, that minister shall submit a written request to the credentialing committee.

#### **7.42 Restoration of Credentials**

The process of considering reinstatement of ministerial credentials shall be as follows:

- A.** Process the minister's application;
- B.** Commend the minister to the assembly and to such other persons and groups as may have been offended by the minister's prior conduct, working toward both restoration of the minister's credentials and full fellowship and service;
- C.** Record in the assembly's professional file on the minister all minutes of actions taken toward reinstatement, and inform Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) of such action;
- D.** Maintain a supportive attitude toward the minister's future ministry.

When a credentialing committee believes that an offending minister should be restored to full leadership, it shall report its findings to the appropriate board or committee for its approval and ratification. Reinstatement shall not be complete without this process. Restoration will be contingent on these actions:

- A.** Full cooperation with and accountability to the supervising minister throughout the restoration process;
- B.** A favorable report and positive recommendation from the supervising minister;
- C.** Demonstrated Christian fidelity and commitment, including active participation in a local congregation. The recovering minister must give strong evidence that the cause of the failure has been corrected;
- D.** Recanting of any spurious beliefs or other disruptive stances that may have contributed to the disciplinary action;
- E.** Submission to all procedures and requirements that are routine to the credentialing of ministers under normal circumstances;

- F. Full compliance with the terms of restoration.

### **7.43 Supervising Minister and the Restoration Process**

Restoring fallen leadership within the church involves a network of concerned persons, including the fallen leader, the credentialing committee, and the supervising minister. The process inevitably requires the close attention of a carefully chosen person who will act as an agent of the Holy Spirit, the credentialing committee, and the church in guiding the fallen leader through the process of restoration, concluding, it is hoped, with full reinstatement. This supervising minister shall be appointed by and be accountable to the credentialing committee. The supervising minister should possess these character traits and leadership qualities:

- A. Unusual wisdom and compassion;
- B. The respect of the credentialing committee;
- C. Trusted by and available to the fallen leader;
- D. Capable of lovingly confronting;
- E. Keeps confidences;
- F. Communicates clearly in written and oral fashion;
- G. Cooperates fully with the instructions of the credentialing committee.

A written covenant of accountability will be established between the supervising minister and the recovering leader. It will include at least these elements:

- A. That the recovering leader should be in frequent contact with the supervising minister and be available as often as required;
- B. That the supervising minister will report to and be accountable to the credentialing committee; and
- C. That the recovering leader will be expected to follow the directions of the supervising minister.

In the event that a restored leader relocates to the jurisdiction of another assembly, the credentialing committee with original jurisdiction assumes the responsibility of forwarding to the credentialing committee of the new assembly all pertinent information, including the status of credentials and a history of the restoration process. In the case of a fallen leader whose credentials have been suspended or revoked, whether or not that minister is in a restoration process, jurisdiction (and the minister's professional file) remains in the assembly where the discipline occurred, although a report of the suspension or revocation will be forwarded to the credentialing committee of any assembly to which the minister attempts to transfer.

## **7.50 Counseling and Disciplining Congregations**

Congregations may depart from norms that characterize a healthy, viable Church of God congregation (see section 6.11). Each congregation within the Church of God movement has a responsibility to be accountable to the others. Any congregation may be subject to counsel and/or discipline when: (1) its spiritual life, shared witness, or theological teachings are contrary to those central to the teaching heritage of the Church of God movement; (2) its internal relationships, whether among its members or with its pastor(s), are disruptive; or (3) its cooperation with and accountability to sister Church of God congregations is grossly lacking.

### **7.51 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee in the Counseling and Disciplining of Congregations**

When aware that a congregation within the assembly's jurisdiction deviates substantially from accepted standards (see section 6.11), the credentialing committee, or its duly appointed representatives, may seek consultation with the pastor(s) and/or lay leaders of the congregation involved in the issue. Such consultation may come to involve an investigative process conducted by the credentialing committee or its official representatives.

### **7.52 The Notification and Investigative Process**

The credentialing committee or its duly appointed representatives shall follow this procedure:

- A.** Inform the pastor and other involved persons of the concerns that have come to the credentialing committee's attention. Preferably, this should be done in person, with at least two members of the committee in attendance. Concerns shall be put in writing.
- B.** Seek a full explanation from the minister and/or other leaders, listening non-judgmentally, but perceptively.
- C.** Make such investigation and arrange for such consultations as are germane to the credentialing committee's work.
- D.** Put the conclusions derived from the investigation, including all findings, recommendations, and actions taken, in writing, and place such writing in the assembly's file on this congregation. A written record of any such action should also be forwarded immediately to Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana.

### **7.53 Warning, Offering Counsel, and Facilitating Change**

As the case may warrant, the credentialing committee may do one or more of the

following:

- A. Provide counsel and/or other services as may be welcomed or can be encouraged. Where there is conflict between the pastor and members of the congregation, or between factions within the congregation, the credentialing committee should advocate the services of an intervention team, consisting of at least two persons well versed in proven conflict resolution methods.
- B. Negotiate and assist in facilitating such changes as are agreed on, always doing so in a spirit of caring and unity.

Should all efforts at tasks A and B above prove ineffective, the credentialing committee may issue a warning of disciplinary action. Types of warning may include these:

- A. Provisional status without removal from listing in the *Yearbook* of the Church of God;
- B. Provisional status with removal from the *Yearbook* of the Church of God;
- C. Loss of certification and tax-exempt status.

Should all warnings be ignored, the credentialing committee will place the congregation on provisional status or on probation. Provisional status is to be interpreted as an expression of interest, redemptive concern, and temporary relationship to a congregation in stress. It is an action of the credentialing committee on behalf of the church at large. It is an extreme measure intended to gain the attention and cooperation of the stressed congregation.

#### **7.54 Requirements for Imposing Provisional Status or Terminating Congregational Certification**

The credentialing committee should substantiate just cause and secure formal concurrence of the assembly to which it is answerable before acting to withdraw the formal certification of a congregation.

Action instituted by the credentialing committee should be presented to the appropriate governing body of the assembly. The action must be sustained by a vote as prescribed in the assembly's bylaws (ideally, a 75% minimum vote). Minutes of all actions taken by the credentialing committee and subsequent actions taken by the appropriate governing body must be properly recorded and preserved in the assembly's permanent files.

Every congregation placed on provisional status or whose certification is terminated shall be permitted an appeal. That appeal must be filed and processed under guidelines established for the benefit of both ministers and congregations.

If a congregation becomes disaffiliated with the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana), the credentialing committee, in cooperation with the appropriate assembly's executive officers, shall seek a legal and equitable financial settlement when facilities or other assets are contested.

#### **7.55 Sanctions**

Should all other means of reconciliation become exhausted, including a reasonable period of provisional status, it may be necessary to impose termination of a congregation's certification. In such a case, Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana) shall be notified, which in turn will notify the Internal Revenue Service for the removal of the congregation's tax-exempt status.

#### **7.56 Terms for Lifting Congregational Probation**

Terms for lifting the provisional status of a congregational should be set forth clearly in writing, along with the provision for periodic review and, if advisable, established timelines. Rationale for both provisional status and termination of congregational certification should be carefully documented, with written copies going to the minister, the congregation's corporate officers, the assembly office, Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana), and, where required by law, to proper authorities outside the church.

#### **7.57 Responsibilities of the Credentialing Committee When Dealing with Disruptive Laypersons**

At times, congregations experience tension caused by laypersons holding attitudes/beliefs or engaging in behavioral patterns that disrupt the congregation's internal unity. Such behavior may be demonstrated by a lack of submission to established authority, whether that of the Holy Spirit, the duly elected leaders of the congregation, or the pastor. In such circumstances, the appropriate credentialing committee may choose to offer its assistance and counsel. Preferably, the credentialing committee will respond to an invitation for assistance from congregational members, responsible representatives of the congregation's governing structure, or the pastor, in accordance with the congregation's bylaws. In rare instances, intervention may be judged necessary without the receipt of a formal invitation.

#### **7.60 Policy Regarding the Right of Appeal for Ministers and Congregations to an Assembly's Governing Board**

Congregations and/or ministers receiving discipline from a credentialing committee have the right to appeal the decision of the committee.

## **7.61 The Appeal Process**

The appeal process shall be as follows.

- A.** A written appeal by the minister or the congregation must be directed to the governing board of the assembly within forty-five (45) days of the contested decision, including a statement of the injustice as perceived by the one submitting the appeal. The appeal must also include the basis for the appeal, e.g., new evidence, evidence of a conflict of interest, etc.
- B.** The governing board of the assembly shall explore all available documents and materials relative to the situation in an effort to determine if the appeal appears to have potential merit.
- C.** In the case of a minister, if after review the governing board determines that an appeal is warranted, an appeal committee of not fewer than three ordained ministers in good standing, and not serving on a credentialing committee, will be named by the governing board, with one to be named as chair. In the case of a congregation, if after review the governing board determines that an appeal is warranted, then an appeal committee of not fewer than three persons in good standing, and not serving on a credentialing committee, will be named by the governing board, with one to be named as chair. Every precaution should be exercised to obtain a committee of impartial persons known for their wisdom and sound Christian judgment.
- D.** Where necessary (e. g., in small assemblies and cases involving conflict of interest), persons from other Church of God assemblies may be utilized. In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for the act of restoration to be transferred to a jurisdiction other than the one in which the termination of credentials occurred, with the full support of the sending and receiving jurisdictions and a transfer of all relevant materials.
- E.** The appeal committee will review the evidence that has been previously examined by the credentialing committee involved in the case. Former actions will be reviewed in the light of any new evidence introduced. The chair and one member of the credentialing committee, someone who was present when the action in question was taken, will be requested to be present.
- F.** It shall be the responsibility of the appeal committee to set the time and place of the meeting. The expenses of such a meeting should be assumed by the assembly.
- G.** A written notification of the appeal committee's decision regarding the appeal will be shared in writing with all persons concerned, and copies of such action kept on file.

## **7.62 If a Grievance Continues to Be Unresolved**

If a grievance continues to be unresolved following the work of an appeal committee, as a last resort the person filing the grievance can seek one of two remaining options.

- A.** Formally request the assembly's governing board to present the unresolved issue to the assembly for resolution. A special meeting of the assembly shall be announced and the purpose of the meeting stated in accordance to the assembly's bylaws requirement for special meetings. A majority vote of the eligible voters in attendance at the special meeting shall be required to resolve the issue in question.
- B.** When the credentialing committee of an assembly lacks the organization, procedures, and/or persons necessary to make the implementation of an appeal process both objective and efficient, the following is suggested as an alternative procedure

It centers in the appointment of a regional appeals group.

- 1.** A formal request seeking assistance should be directed to Church of God Ministries in Anderson, Indiana;
- 2.** Church of God Ministries will present to the parties in conflict the names of several responsible ministers in their geographic area; these are ministers who, if mutually agreed on, could be invited to meet with the conflicting parties;
- 3.** Financial arrangements for travel and hospitality shall be negotiated so that expenses may be shared equitably by the appealing party, the assembly, and Church of God Ministries;
- 4.** Commitment should be made in advance by both parties in the conflict to accept whatever recommendation results from the arbitration of such designated ministers;
- 5.** When this regional appeals group meets, there should be present at least two members (including the chair) of the credentialing committee involved in the action under review. Previous evidence should be examined and any new evidence introduced;
- 6.** A complete written report of the action of the regional appeals group should be directed to all parties involved, with a copy forwarded to Church of God Ministries in Anderson, Indiana.

**C.** Formally request a binding arbitration hearing with a certified Christian arbitrator, the cost of which will be carried by the person(s) seeking arbitration. Binding arbitration shall require a written document of agreement concerning the terms of arbitration. While each circumstance will require some specific language, standard arbitration language should include:

- 1.** A statement signed by both the person filing the grievance and the committee agreeing to abide by the decision of the arbitration.

2. A statement signed by both the person filing the grievance and the committee agreeing to the person or persons who will serve as arbiter or arbitration team.
3. A statement signed by both the person filing the grievance and the committee agreeing to the specifics of the conflict.

Subsequent to the decisions of the arbitrator, the special meeting of the assembly, or the regional appeals group, there remains no other appeal, and such decisions will be final.

#### **7.70 The Limited Role of Church of God Ministries in the Appeal Process**

Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, recognizes the validity of responsible action on the part of a properly constituted and recognized assembly of the Church of God movement, including actions on matters of ministerial or congregational discipline. Problems arise, however, when ministers, congregations, and even assemblies disagree on the correctness of an action, or when they reach an impasse that blocks any action being taken. In such instances, Church of God Ministries can and should become involved for the good of the larger church.

Church of God Ministries takes the stance of service rather than authority whenever engaged in such difficult circumstances. Its primary role is to effect reconciliation and redemption and to promote understanding and fair practice. On rare occasions, it may need to act to finally settle an issue otherwise lacking a solution.

## Section 8.00

### **MATERIALS RELEVANT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS CREDENTIALS MANUAL**

#### **Contents of This Section**

##### **8.10 Official Materials: To Be Used By All**

Helpful information and standard forms are maintained by the office of Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana). These are to be used by all credentialing units and are available on the web site where this manual is found. They include:

1. Form Usage Guide
2. New Minister Profile
3. Minister's Change
4. Inter-Assembly Transfer
5. Release of Information
6. Official Notification
7. Notice of Restoration
8. New Church Profile
9. Church Change
10. New Freestanding Organization Profile
11. Position Codes
12. Assembly Identification Numbers
13. Certificate Orders

##### **8.20 Suggested Materials and Samples**

Various materials other than the standardized and official ones (see 8.10) are maintained by the office of Church of God Ministries (Anderson, Indiana). These materials are to be employed as judged useful by the credentialing units, sometimes in differing forms or ways. They are available on the web site where this manual is found. They include:

1. Credentialing Application Materials
2. Credentials Covenant: Minister's Participation and Registration
3. Orientation to the Church of God movement's History and Teachings
4. Bible Content Discovery Survey Guidelines
5. Indiana Code of Ministerial Ethics
6. Five-Year Review of Ordained Ministers: Process and Recognition
7. Child Protective Policies
8. GuideOne Child/Youth Protective Policies
9. Volunteer Policies and Forms

