



ALABAMA STATE MINISTRIES
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

**Ministry
Credentials and Licensure
Handbook**

Ministry Credentials and Licensure Handbook
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Prophecy

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Dedicated
in Memory of
Bishop L.V. Jones



It is impossible to summarize all that his concern for novice ministers meant to this project.
We also dedicate this handbook to all those who enter this licensure journey.

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PREFACE

Guidebooks have a unique purpose and testify to the effective understanding of the procedure under consideration. This handbook has evolved over the past several years and diverse review boards of the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy. The seed of this handbook was planted by Bishop L V Jones in 1997 when he appointed a Ministry Review Board and formalized the licensure process.

Our goal from the beginning was to summarize the credentialing procedure. But a procedural handbook was never compiled for pastors and perspective ministers.

And from 1997 to 2018, the contours of this manual were still too undefined to publish. And the ministry review team was occupied with a backlog of license applicants, so a procedural manual was left indefinitely on “the back burner.”

It was State Bishop Dr. Brian Sutton who “got the ball rolling” in September 2018 when he asked me to compile the information in a booklet detailing the process and could be given to new licensure applicants. The booklet would set forth the requirements and procedure for licensure.

We considered the licensure process by reviewing past review board notes, did further research, and talked with colleagues. We identified the minutiae involved from the acknowledgement of one’s call to the conferring of license at the state convention. I wrote copious notes expanding the original concept set forth by both Bishop Jones and Bishop Sutton, which finally developed into the first edition. This project forced us to consider the primary work of the review team.

Our primary work is to function as an advisory council that assists the State Bishop with various ministry issues as mandated by the International Assembly. In addition, we interview applicants for credentials in the Church of God of Prophecy [CGP] when they have completed the licensure process. And after the interview, we provide a unified recommendation concerning the interviewed applicant to the State Bishop. So, “Ministry Review Council” [MRC] was adopted.

We acknowledge that a resource of this kind can be highly subjective. Indeed, it is an act of courage to publish one’s thoughts on “how-to-follow” a procedure. One would think an individual who embarks on such a credentialing journey would automatically know how to follow the process. Yet experience shows that some want “to do their own thing” with seemingly no regard for directions, instructions, or supervision. It seems that a uniform procedure has bad connotations, since we know that God calls individuals.

While it is true that divine calling is an individual issue, the credentialing process to ordination in the Church of God of Prophecy doesn’t deviate from applicant to applicant. Every applicant is responsible to complete a uniform application; fulfill uniform requirements; covenant to teach,

preach, and practice identical CGP doctrine and polity; submissively tithe income; report monthly; faithfully cooperate with the State Bishop; and follow the same uniform licensure trail as every other applicant.

No CGP minister is exempt from these. The credentialing procedure shows no favoritism or special status. To date, the only exception relates to applicants who come from other Christian organizations, who may have already completed a credentialing process in the previous church. Such exceptions are decided by the State Bishop and his General Presbyter.

In turn, the primary role of the Ministry Review Council, by the direction and supervision of the State Bishop, is no longer to merely interview candidates and counsel the Bishop, although we will continue to do that. But under the new and improved mandate, the Ministry Review Council will also assist the pastors in mentoring and shepherding the applicants through the process. We will neither do the pastor's mentoring work nor pursue the applicants to finish the process. Instead, the MRC will be the cheering support group for the applicants.

Our appreciation goes to all those ministers who, without any procedural manual, have blazed the trail before us. And much gratitude and respect are extended to those who served with me from 1997 to the present. One never grows tired of affirming how much we owe those with whom we work. Sincere thanks go to all of them.

In the five years since this Ministry Credentials and Licensure Handbook was published, it has been used in the licensure process in Alabama, referenced by regional and international leaders, and adapted by other state and regional review boards for their respective licensure work. We are gratified to know that it has helped other CGP ministries.

This new edition continues to be the fruit of team effort. It has been revised extensively. Some elements of the licensure process have changed or been discontinued. The Foundations course is now online under the auspices of the Leadership Development Department of the International Offices.

We are grateful for the confidence and trust our State Bishop has shown to us in this endeavor. It proved to be greater than a cursory review might reveal, and it continues to be a challenge as we look toward future generations of ministers.

It is an honor to serve the Lord in ministry. We pray that this procedural handbook will be a blessing to the Church of God of Prophecy and those who pursue credentials in our church.

Our prayer is that we may all build on the foundation already laid to the best of our individual faith and abilities (Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 3:9-15).

Sylvester Smith, DMin.

Sylvester Smith, DMin.,
Ministry Review Council Chairman

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a collaborative work of the State Bishop of the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy and his Ministry Review Council. It contains information to guide the applicant minister through the licensure process. While the current information is affirmed to be complete, the license applicant should understand that it is an on-going work and may be revised from time to time to reflect current licensure requirements and methodology.

In this handbook, we have compiled a succinct outline of the licensure process for the license applicant. The CGP has never possessed such a compact guide so essential to understanding the licensure process itself. This is an indispensable handbook for all pastors, licensed ministers, and those seeking credentials in this church.

We have complied with the Church of God of Prophecy's current licensure requirements and have identified the step-by-step process an applicant must follow to be credentialed in this church. The details included in this handbook are not intended to insult the applicant's intelligence but rather to encourage a steady focus on the licensure process.

Our duty has been (1) to organize the confused process of ministry licensure; (2) to supply a continuous, smooth licensure process that is intended by the International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy; (3) to give clarity for pastors and applicants, without confusing or disrupting the licensure process; and (4) to note such details, obstacles, or misinformation that discourage the prospective minister's resolve and focus.

It is evident to all of us that God calls his servants according to his own will and not according to human whim or relationships. In addition, there are some human hurdles that can create confusion when attempting to maintain a steady course to licensure. First, there are the broad responsibilities of the State Bishop. His ministry duties do not normally allow for individual attention to every detail involved in the candidate's licensure journey. Second, the Ministry Review Council comprises Senior Pastors with local church pastoral duties. They do not currently track the progress, or lack thereof, in the candidate's licensure process. Third, there are the individual candidate's responsibilities (work, family, etc). Fourth, there is the commitment of the individual. Only the individual candidate can control the personal commitment to the process.

Finally, there is the time frame involved. At present, the State Bishop and the MRC expect the lay ministry applicant to serve a one-year-term of ministry service under the mentorship of a senior pastor before pursuing further credentials. However, a Lay Minister has the option to continue as a Lay Minister indefinitely as the Lord leads.

After successfully completing the Lay Minister term, if the applicant chooses to continue, the licensee applicant will begin and complete the licensure process within the succeeding 12-18 months. This means that, after the Lay Minister term, the Lay Minister must begin the full licensing process in the month following the state convention.

This ensures that the licensee's file is complete. It enables the Ministry Review Council to review the file and obtain any missing information. It allows enough time to set licensee interviews. It enables the Ministry Review Council to submit recommendations to the State Bishop. It allows enough time for the State Bishop and the General Presbyter to complete their work in the process. Finally, it ensures that the approved candidates can be ordained at the scheduled State Convention.

Consideration will be given to special circumstances outlined later in this handbook. Any one of those five hurdles may confuse or stop the applicant's efforts to maintain a steady course and complete the licensure process.

In compiling this handbook, we have collaborated to reduce the anxiety of the applicant, but also to simplify the process as much as possible. It is only necessary to add that we take full responsibility for this handbook and any grammatical or typographical errors therein.

This 2023 Handbook is the current revised edition. And we will revise it further as International Assembly guidelines require. In our efforts to be comprehensive, we have repeated some information. This is to clarify the process for the applicant. With that caveat, we present this handbook without prejudice or favor.

Our first counsel to the applicant is that you should review the total licensure process before beginning the process. Carefully read and digest this manual before proceeding to complete the licensure requirements.

We use several terms that are interchangeable in meaning. Some terms are used because of CGP heritage and familiarity. See the Glossary at the end of this manual for any unclear technical terms. And, where appropriate, we have directly cited CGP International Assembly polity, rulings, and instructions. All such references are the current official stand of the CGP and are cited from the Ministry Policy Manual, 2018.

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 1:24-25 ESV)

Chapter Two

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

In order to be licensed and credentialed for ministry in the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy, it is essential that you understand the credentialing procedure. It is a process that begins with the applicant.

It begins in your personal struggle with God about your calling. Ministry is both a calling and a profession. But the profession without the calling is a dry, lifeless desert. The calling is the iron framework that supports and sustains your future ministry.

Your desire to be faithful to God and his holy word is the most important element of your ministry. The future of this church is in your hands. To paraphrase Apostle Paul from First Corinthians 3:9-15, you are fellow workers with God. This church is no ordinary construction project. It is God's field and building. And those who have gone before us were master builders who laid the foundation, by the grace of God. It should not be taken lightly nor built upon haphazardly. Apostle Paul wrote, "Let each one take care how he builds upon it."

We cannot lay a new foundation because our Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. And if anyone builds on that foundation, with good or bad material, the workman's work will be identified and tested by the fire.

If the workman's work survives the test of fire, the workman will receive a reward. And if the fire burns up the workman's work, the workman will suffer loss but will be saved, "but only as through the fire."

This manual includes steps for applicants pursuing either a Lay Minister Certificate or a Minister License in the Church of God of Prophecy, in the state of Alabama. Ministers who pursue ministry credentials, with few exceptions, do so by first obtaining a lay ministry certificate.

The State Bishop may make an exception for ministers joining the Church of God of Prophecy who hold credentials in another organization. There are basically two exceptions that apply to the Bishop's discretion in this procedure: 1) a minister's past ministry or pastoral experience, and 2) a minister's earned academic credentials.

In either case the State Bishop will determine which steps, of the Church of God of Prophecy licensure process, have been previously completed by the joining minister. At the discretion of the State Bishop the joining minister may be interviewed by the state Ministry Review Council.

In exceptional cases, with the specific counsel and permission of the Presiding Bishop/General Presbyter, the standard procedures for licensing ministers from other organizations may be waived.

There are often questions regarding which license to pursue when beginning ministry. The following suggestions should be observed:

1. Those persons with no prior ministry experience, who desire to receive ministry license, should first pursue the Lay Minister Certificate. This certificate will enable the license applicant to serve in ministry while she/he pursues full credentials.
2. Once the Lay Minister Certificate is received, the license applicant will immediately begin the process of pursuing full ministry credentialing and ministry licensure in the Church of God of Prophecy.
3. At the discretion of the State Bishop, those persons with prior ministry experience, advanced academic preparation, or who are joining the Church of God of Prophecy with credentials in another organization, may begin immediately in the process of pursuing full credentialing in the Church of God of Prophecy, without obtaining a Lay Minister Certificate.

General Ministry Advice

The ministry is a high and holy calling and should be considered carefully, seriously, and prayerfully. A deep reverence and sincerity toward God should always be the priority of the license applicant. It is God, and not the church, who calls the individual into ministry service. Therefore, the applicant's primary allegiance and commitment is to God.

The Church of God of Prophecy has some fundamental requirements for applicants who desire ministry credentials and ordination. God's work does not operate in a vacuum, but in the real world where practical, civil duties are required, as well as spiritual.

The Apostle Paul instructed Pastor Timothy to "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 ESV). And "always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5 ESV).

Chapter Three

Perspectives and Expectations

Challenges and Obstacles

In this licensure process, there are a few challenges for all involved.

- Some people complain about the time it takes. Don't let those who are not pursuing ministry license influence you in this regard.
- Some applicants are not serious about their calling and have not seriously and reverently counted the cost of ministry. They lack determination, self-discipline, and the understanding of the hard work involved in the licensure process. Don't be one of those people.
- Some applicants allow others to influence them into emotional, impatient attitudes. Don't let others influence you in this manner. If you have questions, contact your pastor/mentor or the Ministry Review Council for the answers.
- We lack trained mentors. Some pastors don't want to be a mentor. The State Bishop will help you connect with a mentor.

Perspectives

Our State Bishop is occupied with all kinds of ministry issues that concern the Ministers, local churches, and overall business for the Church of God of Prophecy within his assigned area.

He is capable of exhaustion, just as you are, has family obligations, just as you do, and carries the heavy weight of oversight for all our churches.

In addition, each member of the Ministry Review Council is a senior pastor, who also has other important responsibilities.

So, the point is this: Your State Bishop and the Ministry Review Council will be patient with you, please return the courtesy. We are your cheerleading support team. At all times, we will appropriately answer your questions, give advice, challenge you, and encourage you. This means that your commitment drives the licensure process. We will neither cajole you, coax you, nor plead with you to finish this process. The responsibility to complete it is totally yours. Only you can decide whether you receive credentials, or not, as a licensed minister with the CGP. We hope you will decide to commit to completing the licensure process.

We also understand that an applicant may have "special needs," which would hinder an applicant's ability to successfully complete the licensure process in the allotted time. The applicant is responsible to communicate any personal "special needs" to the State Bishop, who will determine whether special considerations are in order. Special needs are such things as pregnancy, sight impairment or other special need that would hinder a license applicant from

coming to the assigned venue for an interview.

Again, we counsel you to carefully read and digest this manual before starting the credentialing procedure. Be certain that you clearly understand the hard work and commitment involved.

Along with your spouse, discuss the process, the financial commitment, and moral support you will need to complete it. Together, review your calendar and schedule, with a view to making a comfortable timeline for completing this licensure process.

Consider all your responsibilities, family, work, church, and so forth. You may require 1st, 2nd, or even 3rd drafts before your timeline conforms to your situation. And of course, timelines can be adjusted as circumstances change.

Expectations

Your State Bishop and the Ministry Review Council expect you to successfully complete the licensure process within a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 18 months, beyond the Lay Minister Certificate, to receive your license and be ordained at the next State Convention after your candidacy is approved.

We recognize that extenuating circumstances may occur during your licensure journey which are beyond your control. Each minister's case will be considered accordingly.

How should you proceed in your licensure journey? Note the wisdom passed on by Solomon. "By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Prov. 24:3-6 ESV).

Just as houses are built from a plan and wars are won or lost because of a plan, it is wisdom to make a licensure plan that fits your schedule. Again, note Solomon's wisdom. "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls" (Prov. 25:28 ESV). Self-control is the critical element in successfully completing the licensure process.

Chapter Four

Personal Prerequisites for All Applicants

Obviously, you must be born again, sanctified, and filled with Holy Spirit. You must be baptized in water and be a faithful Covenant Member of a local Church of God of Prophecy in Alabama. In addition, you must be in agreement with CGP doctrine, or willing to learn without causing confusion or disruption.

What constitutes faithfulness? Faithfulness includes loyal attendance and regular worship participation, NOT hit-and-miss visits.

Faithfulness involves agreeing with the Statement of Faith for the Church of God of Prophecy and the Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices of the Church of God of Prophecy as stated in the Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section Two, pgs. 154-171.

Faithfulness includes financial support with tithes and offerings. If you do not agree with any of these, you should not seek ministry credentials with the Church of God of Prophecy until you can agree. If you need more teaching or clarification of the Statement of Faith and the Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices please contact your pastor.

READ the NEXT PARAGRAPH CAREFULLY

The State Bishop and the Ministry Review Council will verify your faithfulness, with both your pastor and the Church Treasurer. There must be clear evidence that you tithe your income and give offerings (i.e., tithing envelopes clearly marked “Tithes”) so that the Church Treasurer can verify you are faithful in this crucial practice.

It is essential that you understand how important faithfulness and loyalty are to Christ, to the Church of God of Prophecy, and to your ministry. If you are not faithful to the local church and are not supportive of your pastor, your license application will be rejected. In fact, if you do not have a track record of being faithful in tithes and offerings at your local church, then your pastor should not recommend you, and the congregation should not set you forth to be licensed as a minister.

So, if you are not currently faithful in this requirement, firmly commit to faithfulness and practice it now. Your application depends on it!

Furthermore, your ministry credentials will always be dependent on your continued faithfulness as a credentialed minister in the Church of God of Prophecy. As a lay minister or a licensed minister holding credentials with the Church of God Prophecy, you are expected to be faithful in preaching, teaching, and practicing the beliefs, doctrine, and polity practices of this church.

Unfaithfulness in any of these will cause rejection of license application and the rescinding of

previously issued credentials. [See Chapter Eight, Tithing for Ministers and Respect for Assembly Guidance in Doctrine].

Faithfulness includes practical “hands-on” involvement in local church ministries. The Scripture says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (Eccl. 9:10 ESV).

Some examples of hands-on involvement are pick up trash on church properties (inside and outside); clean church toilets; mow church lawn; sweep, mop, and vacuum church floors; teach Sunday School classes, do community outreach, etc. Servanthood is key. Don’t ask, “Why?” Instead ask, “Where? What? When?”

And again, Scripture says, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1-2 ESV).

Next, you must be confident of your calling to the ministry. Pray about your call! Carefully consider whether you are truly called. A divine call is more than emotional, exciting testimony or a vision of glamour and fame.

Remember, ministry is a high calling, a holy calling. It should not be entered lightly. You must be spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically prepared to enter ministry. You should always maintain deep reverence and sincerity toward God.

Involve your spouse and together seriously and honestly ask the following questions:

- Does your spouse believe you are called? Your spouse knows you better than anyone else and will be your greatest supporter.

Your spouse loves you and wants you to obey God and be successful in all you do. So, involve your spouse at the beginning of this licensure journey.

- Does your family and friends recognize your calling? If you are single, these people know you better than anyone. But be certain that you get “objective” answers. And balance their responses with those of acquaintances who are not acquainted with or influenced by family and friends.

- Does your local Church recognize your calling? A person who feels a calling into ministry must have the support of the local church.

And these folks will be your most ardent supporters in the Kingdom of God. They believe in you and want to see your ministry thrive.

- Do you have a Scripture that anchors your calling? This is not an absolute requirement, but it is a good, solid foundation upon which to build your ministry. In addition, it will encourage you in times of ministry distress.

- Do you have assurance and conviction that God has called you to his ministry? You are the only one who must be convinced so do not deceive yourself.

The Christian ministry is not a career choice. Rather, it is a sovereign choice from the heart and mind of God. If he has called you, he has determined that you will serve his purpose and bring glory to his name.

- Can you point to a time, place, and environment where God called you? This is personally important to you.

Note that Abraham could point back to his call in the land of Ur (Gen. 12:1).

Moses could point back to the burning bush on the side of Mt. Horeb (Ex. 3).

Samuel could point back to his call (I Sam. 3).

David could point back to his call to be king (I Sam. 16:13).

Apostles Peter, Andrew, James, and John could point back to their calls (Mt. 4:18-19

& 21). And Apostle Paul could point back to his call (Acts 9).

There is a specific time, place, and/or event in which you vividly remember that God called you to be his servant. And that memory will fortify your spirit when the enemy attacks with doubt and discouragement.

It will be your rock when people sneer at you and deride you and criticize you and question your motives and reject your calling and generally mock your commitment.

- Discuss your calling with your pastor. Ask for an objective evaluation.
- Does your pastor recognize your calling?
- Does your pastor think you are ready to proceed to the licensure process?
- Does your pastor allow you to preach and lead ministry in the local church? Practice preaching by asking your pastor and other pastors to allow you to preach.

Afterwards, ask for feedback and personally evaluate yourself and honestly analyze the preaching event.

The questions above will give you a good indication of whether you are called. And if you decide that you are not called, then it is better to discover that now than later.

Chapter Five

The Lay Minister Certificate

General Assembly Directions

When a person (who has been saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost, and baptized by immersion) begins to recognize that he/she has been called by God into the ministry, it is necessary that he/she have a time of preparation and study to prepare him/herself for the ministry.

The lay ministry period is a time when a ministry novice can prove him/herself worthy of recommendation by the local church, examination by the Presbytery, and licensed by the church.

The Lay Minister's Certificate is designed to give the ministerial candidate the recognition needed while gaining experience and showing oneself to be faithful.

This certificate is to be endorsed by the overseer of the nation/region/state in which the lay minister is working. It is necessary for the local church where he/she is a member to recommend the one who desires to work for the Lord to the overseer; and if in his judgment the candidate is worthy of receiving this certificate, it can be granted. (55th Assembly Minutes, 1960, p. 134). [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, III. Lay Ministry, p. 80].

What does the Lay Minister Certificate Authorize?

The Lay Minister Certificate authorizes the lay minister to publish, preach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ; to conduct prayer meetings; and to hold revivals. The Lay Minister cannot receive members, baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, conduct business meetings, or perform weddings. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, III. Lay Ministry, B. Authorization, p. 81].

The Lay Minister Reports

Alabama Lay Ministers Are Required to Report Monthly to State Bishop's office. See Chapter Eight, Reporting System of the Ministry, # E.

The lay minister should keep a careful record of all ministerial activities so that an accurate quarterly report can be given. The Alabama CGP State Bishop requires monthly reporting. And you are required to report quarterly to your local church's business conference.

The Lay Minister's Endorsement

The local church's endorsement of the lay minister is limited to lay ministry only and does not authorize further advancement in the ministry without approval of the State Bishop and further action by the local church in "regular" or "called" conference. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, III. Lay Ministry, C. Policies, #3, p. 82].

The Lay Minister Certificate Renewal

The Lay Minister's Certificate must be renewed at the beginning of each calendar year if the lay minister wants to continue pursuing the ministry. The request for renewal should be made to the overseer. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, III Lay Ministry, C. Policies, #4, p. 82].

The Lay Minister's Church Membership

When a lay minister moves to a new location, his/her membership should be immediately transferred to a church in that area. Preparation for becoming licensed may then continue between the lay minister, the local church, and the overseer. It is to be understood that this new local church would give its consideration [recommendation] at the end of the year to the person's worthiness of continuing as a lay minister. If the local church deems it wise, the lay minister would be set forth in conference in the regular manner as was done initially by the church from which the lay minister transferred (77th Assembly Minutes, 1982, p. 83). [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, III. Lay Ministry, C. Policies, # 5, p. 82].

The Procedural Steps to a Lay Minister Certificate

STEP ONE, review what the Lay Minister is authorized to do and discuss your "calling" with your pastor, your family, and your confidante. Listen to their advice and wisdom. [See Chapter 4, pages 8-9].

STEP TWO, if your Pastor also recognizes the call of God on your life, he/she will communicate with the State Bishop, give you the Lay Minister application documents to complete. Your Pastor will also plan a setting forth conference to recommend the local church set you forth for the Lay Minister Certificate.

The formal "setting forth" is done in a regular or called conference, in which the pastor will make the recommendation to the local church. If the local church conference agrees with the pastor that you are called to ministry, it will transact the setting forth in the normal course of church business protocols [see step four below].

STEP THREE, when your pastor gives you the Lay Minister Application, thoroughly read it to clarify all information you will need. We recommend that you create a personal ministry file. Assemble all the required documents and place them in that file. It will keep everything together so that you can easily access documents as you are ready to complete them. We recommend that you make yourself a personal copy of the completed documents for future reference.

Then begin and fully complete the application. Be certain to answer every question and do not leave any answer line blank. If a question does not apply to you, then simply write "N/A" on the answer line. This shows your State Bishop and the Ministry Review Council that you have neither ignored nor inadvertently missed a question.

If you have previous marriages and divorces, then you are required to complete a Marriage-Divorce questionnaire. Request this form from the State Bishop, who will send it to you with instructions. Retain a copy of your completed form in your personal ministry file.

Next, be certain to sign the completed Lay Minister application.

Next, complete the Release of Information Authorization document. Be certain this document is complete and accurate.

Next, complete, sign and date the Permission to Obtain Background Check form. Be certain that this form is complete, and all information is accurate and true.

Next, make yourself a timeline for completing this licensure process, with your expected completion dates.

Email a copy of your timeline to the State Bishop and pastor. Your tentative timeline will show your pastor and the State Bishop that you are serious about obtaining a Lay Minister Certificate. It can also serve as your personal motivation since you know the State Bishop has a copy and is monitoring your progress. The state bishop's email address is rramsey@alcogop.org.

STEP FOUR, your pastor will announce and convene a setting forth church conference. Be certain to put the date and time in your calendar and be certain to attend this conference.

WHEN your local church has transacted the setting forth conference, your Pastor and the Church Clerk will complete and sign the proper Endorsement document and ask you to sign it also. Be sure to get a copy of this endorsement document for your personal ministry file.

Next, after the local church has set you forth, be certain to get your pastor to complete the Endorsement statement at the bottom of your Lay Minister application.

Next, ask your pastor to verify that all your documents are completed. Then scan each completed document into an email to the State Bishop. If you do not know how to scan documents or create electronic documents, ask for help.

STEP FIVE, The State Bishop's Action

WHEN the State Bishop receives your lay minister documents, he will do the following things.

- He will open an electronic minister's file in your name and insert your electronic documents there. This file will be your permanent ministry file in the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy State Office.
- He will verify your faithfulness in attendance and stewardship. He will decide whether you are eligible or not for the Lay Minister Certificate. If he has knowledge or discovers knowledge about you that prohibits licensure at this time, he will send you a letter, with a copy to your Pastor, explaining his decision.
- If the Bishop determines that you have issues to be resolved, at his discretion, he may assign you to a probationary period before continuing the process.
- If you qualify by meeting all requirements, the State Bishop will approve the application and send a letter notifying both you and your Pastor of his decision.

He will welcome you as a Lay Minister in the Church of God of Prophecy. He will also include other appropriate information and instructions as he considers proper.

Normally, your mentor will be your pastor, but the State Bishop may contact you personally to discuss this matter with you. If your pastor is unable to be your mentor, then the bishop will find an alternative mentor who is willing to work with you through this process.

STEP SIX, Issuance of Lay Minister Certificate

When your Lay Minister application is approved, the State Bishop will issue the official Lay Minister Certificate for the current calendar year and mail it to the pastor with instructions that it should be presented to the candidate in a public ceremony of installation and consecration.

And the Bishop will write a letter of commendation to the new Lay Minister.

- He will include instructions to the Lay Minister regarding the exercise of the ministry, under the guidance of the pastor.

STEP SEVEN, Certificate Presentation and Installation

After receiving the Lay Minister Certificate from the State Bishop, the local pastor will present the Certificate to the Lay Minister in a public ceremony of installation and consecration.

After the Lay Minister Certificate is issued, the new Lay Minister will serve a minimum of one year, under the mentorship of a senior pastor, before being eligible to be set forth as a Licensed Minister.

Once you obtain your Lay Minister's license it is time to begin the online Foundations Courses found at <https://cblcogop.org/program-overview/>.

STEP EIGHT,

- Order two copies of Practice These Things: Mentor Ministry Workbook. One copy for yourself and one for your Pastor/Mentor from http://www.whitewingbooks.com/Practice-These-Things--by-Brian-Sutton_p_406.html. This a requirement for your Lay Minister Certificate.
- Schedule mutually convenient times to regularly meet with your Pastor/Mentor and to complete the Practice These Things assignments.

Note: Thoroughly read and digest each chapter and lesson. Discuss each lesson with your Pastor/Mentor and ask questions you have about the information.

WHEN the Practice These Things 11 lessons are read and the assignments completed, you must submit all completed assignments to the State Bishop. All the assignments must be completed and mailed together in one mailing. These assignments will become a part of the applicant's permanent ministry file.

Chapter Six

The Licensed Minister Credentials

Licensed Minister

You must “complete a minimum of one year as a lay minister and demonstrate competence as a minister” in order to be recommended and set forth as a licensed minister candidate. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, E. Procedures for Licensure, Licensed Minister, p. 99.]

“After licensing, the minister continues to be a private member of the local church and is subject to its government and discipline as prescribed by the International Assembly. However, in matters relating to his/her ministry, the minister is under the supervision of the Presbytery. The local church may take no action regarding the termination of a licensed minister.” [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, V. Licensed Ministers, p. 102.]

What Is the Licensed Minister Authorized to Do?

Licensed ministers are authorized to preach and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ, establish churches, baptize, administer the Lord’s Supper, and the washing of the saints’ feet. Those who pastor have the authority to conduct local business conferences and solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriages. Ministers who are not currently pastoring a church may receive permission from their overseer to solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriages that are biblically valid according to the church’s understanding. When the General Overseer’s Office receives approval from the overseer’s office, a special permit will be issued and mailed directly to the minister. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Ministry Policies, Section One, H. Authorization, p. 106 and VII. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS, H. Performing Marriages, p. 11].

NOTE: Non-pastoring Licensed Ministers are NOT authorized to conduct local business conferences or solemnize the rites of matrimony.

Non-pastoring Licensed Ministers must request and receive the State Bishop’s permission for a special permit to solemnize the rites of matrimony. This special permit is sent from the General Overseer’s office and may be rescinded at any time by the State Bishop and General Overseer.

Ministers Coming into the Church from Other Organizations

When ministers come from another organization, they may be licensed or ordained after they have been examined to determine their qualifications and their spiritual and doctrinal purity. In exceptional cases, with the specific order of the presiding bishop/general presbyter, some of the standard provisions for examining candidates may be waived. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process—2008, II. General Areas of Focus, G. Ministers Coming into the Church From Other Organizations, p.106].

Most ministers who pursue Church of God of Prophecy ministry credentials do so through the process of first obtaining a Lay Minister Certificate (see Chapter Five above). However, the State Bishop may, at his discretion, apply certain exceptions for ministers, who are joining the Church of God of Prophecy from another organization. These ministers will have previous ministry and pastoral experience or have earned certain academic credentials. In such cases as mentioned above, the State Bishop will determine which licensure steps have been previously completed. He will approve advanced standing for the license applicant and assign the entrance licensure step for him or her.

At this level you have either completed the Lay Ministry Certificate 1-yr training period, or the State Bishop has advanced you to this stage of the licensure process. Your 11 lesson assignments from Practice These Things should have already been submitted to the State Bishop's office for grading and to become a part of your permanent ministry file.

If you are an applicant with credentials from another organization, your pastor may have already given you the Licensed Minister application, your Release of Information Authorization, and the Permission to Obtain Background Check form. In any case, the State Bishop will have established an electronic ministry file in your name, and it will be your permanent ministry file in the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy/ state office. When the State Bishop agrees that you are ready to proceed to the Licensed Minister level he will communicate with your pastor.

If you hold the Lay Minister Certificate and are ready to proceed in the licensure process, you will retrace many of the same steps as before.

STEP ONE: Discuss the Licensed Minister process with Your Pastor

Frankly discuss the following licensure issues with your pastor.

- Review what the Licensed Minister is authorized to do.
- How important is this process to the license applicant?
- How much time is involved to complete the process?
- What is the dedication required to complete the process?
- How important is spousal and family support to the licensure process?
- What are the financial investments involved?
- Will your pastor ask the local conference to set you forth as a Licensed Minister?
 - If, yes, your pastor will contact the State Bishop for permission to proceed to a setting forth conference.
 - If, your pastor is not ready to set you forth, as a Licensed Minister, respectfully discuss the pastor's reasoning. Honestly address the pastor's concerns.
 - If the State Bishop has placed you on probation, follow his instructions.

Identify with your Pastor what measures you need to take to resolve his concerns. [What assignments you must complete, etc].

Willingly do whatever is requested of you. Make an improvement plan, with dates, committed to change whatever the pastor has identified as needing to be changed.

Prove yourself to be faithful. Do whatever is necessary . . . make whatever commitment . . . to be

faithful and follow through in faithfulness. Complete your required changes.

Improve your personal appearance and conduct. Ministry is serious – very serious – and requires spiritual and professional comportment. You don't have to be the silent type, BUT you don't want to be a clown or buffoon either.

Your looks, behavior and demeanor impact others and can be a key to the success or failure of your ministry. Remember, you represent the King of Glory. See a dentist for any needed dental work. Get your hair cut and neatly trim your beard and mustache. Both male and female applicants should dress appropriately and always dress modestly. Remember, the world is not our example or model. Christ is our example, and we are His model to the world.

If personal and family finances are out of control, get some help and counseling to bring them under control. An accountant, banker, or credit counselor can advise and help you with this.

Always treat the opposite sex respectfully and appropriately, including your spouse. The Scripture teaches that we are examples to others and should conduct ourselves as servants of God.

STEP TWO: Your Pastor Will Ask the State Bishop for Permission to Proceed

WHEN you have 1) served the minimum of one year as a Lay Minister, 2) completed the requirements and assignments of Practice These Things, 3) demonstrated ministry competencies, and 4) your pastor agrees that you are ready to proceed to the Licensed Minister level, your pastor will contact the Bishop for his permission to proceed to the next step of recommending you to the local church as an applicant for the Licensed Minister credentials.

WHEN the State Bishop receives your Pastor's request to proceed with the licensure process, he will examine your permanent file established when you began the Lay Minister process. The State Bishop will examine your file . . .

- to be certain all paperwork and requirements are up-to-date;
- to be certain that you have been faithful at your local church;
- to be certain that you have faithfully reported to his office.

NEXT, the State Bishop will communicate his decision to proceed or not to your Pastor. If no, then he will notify you with his rationale and instructions. If yes, the State Bishop will give his permission to your Pastor to proceed to the setting forth conference. He'll also ask your Pastor to give you the official licensure documents for you to complete.

STEP THREE: Important Licensure Documents

1. Licensed Minister Application
2. Release of Information Authorization

3. Permission for Background Check Form
4. Three Character References

WHEN your pastor gives you these documents there are several things to do immediately.

First, make yourself a “Personal License File.” This file will be where you keep copies of all documentation pertaining to your licensing journey.

Second, complete the Release of Information Authorization. Be certain it is complete and accurate.

Third, complete the Permission for Background Check Form. No hedging here. Open, honest and accurate information is essential.

NEXT, include a 2x2 passport photo of yourself. You can get these made at Walgreens Pharmacy, Wal-Mart Photo Shop, US Postal Service or another professional photography shop. Do not send a smartphone selfie or a photo from your family photo album. This photo must be a high definition, professionally made headshot (chest up). It goes in your file and will be used on your Church of God of Prophecy minister’s ID card.

In addition, you will need to send a good, clear photo of you and your spouse for the State Bishop to keep in your file. This is so he, and subsequent State Bishops will know your face and recognize you.

Fourth, request a Character Reference from each of three people not related to you, and not living in your home.

Fifth, read the blank license application in its entirety to be aware of the information you will need to complete this important document.

Six, assemble all information and data documentation necessary to accurately complete this application and place them in your Personal License File. Then the necessary documents and data will be where it needs to be so that you can complete the application at the appropriate time, and you won’t be searching for needed data.

WHEN all data and information is available, sit down and complete the application as soon as possible, diligently, and completely.

IF it is not immediately convenient, put it in your schedule (make an appointment with yourself), to complete this application without interruptions and as soon as possible. The longer you wait to complete and mail the application, the easier it will be to push it further back in your schedule.

DON’T PROCRASTINATE!

STEP FOUR: Make Your Licensure Plan and Timeline. Keep it sacred!

Write out your plan step-by-step with deadline dates for completing each step. The procedure outlined in this manual provides you a basic plan, all you need to do is set dates, times, and deadlines for completing your plan.

Submit a copy of your “licensure plan” in your documents package for the State Bishop and give a copy to your pastor/mentor. This is a personal commitment. You have decided and acted. You are publicly stating to your mentor, and to the Bishop, that you are going all the way. And knowing that the Bishop has a copy of your timeline, and is tracking your progress, will give you incentive when the journey seems hard.

WHEN you begin completing the application, do not leave any information spaces blank. Show the State Bishop that you have read the item, even if it does not apply to you. If an item does not apply to you, then simply write “N/A” in the provided space.

Follow the application instructions in detail. Complete your biographical data in detail. If you are not certain of the requested dates and do not have supporting documents that provide such dates, then give approximate dates as accurately as possible.

If you were born again, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit at your local church, then your Church Clerk can supply you with those dates, including water baptism and the date you became a Covenant Member.

Next, be certain to sign the completed Licensed Minister application and make yourself a copy for your personal ministry file.

Next, if you have followed the Lay Minister path, you should already have the required Licensure documents. Go to step five. If you do not have the Licensure documents, go online to www.alcogop.org/resources and scroll down to Ministerial Licensure. There you’ll find the Licensure document list of the required documents. Download and print them. And complete them as per the instructions in this Handbook.

STEP FIVE: State Office Documents

Once you have assembled all required documents, it is preferable that you scan and email them to rramsey@alcogop.org. If you do not have scanning capability, you may mail all completed documents to:

Church of God of Prophecy
Attention: State Bishop
7736 Madison Blvd, Suite 209
Huntsville, AL 35806

**BEFORE YOU MAIL YOUR DOCUMENTS, PLEASE ENSURE ALL
DOCUMENTS ARE ENCLOSED!**

- Also include a copy of your timeline for the State Bishop. Give a copy of your timeline to your pastor. A copy of your tentative timeline will assure your pastor and the State Bishop that you are serious about obtaining the Licensed Minister credentials.

STEP SIX: State Bishop's Permission to Proceed

WHEN your Pastor receives the State Bishop's permission to proceed, he will notify you of the date and time for the setting forth conference. Set the conference date in your schedule. Be certain that you attend that conference.

At the setting forth conference, your pastor will recommend to the local church that you be set forth as a Licensed Minister applicant.

Note, if the State Bishop has waived the Lay Minister or other requirements for the ministry applicant, the applicant is still required to be set forth by the local church conference and to obtain the Pastor and local church endorsement.

STEP SEVEN: The Setting Forth Conference

Your pastor will announce and convene a setting forth church conference. Be certain to put the date and time in your calendar and attend the conference.

WHEN your local church has transacted the setting forth conference, your Pastor and the Church Clerk will complete and sign the proper Endorsement document and ask you to sign it also. Be sure to get a copy of this endorsement document for your personal ministry file.

Next, after the local church has set you forth, be certain to get your pastor to complete the Endorsement statement at the bottom of your Licensed Minister application.

Next, the setting forth conference document and the Endorsement document should be scanned into an email to the State Bishop. Be certain to get a copy of these documents for your personal ministry file.

STEP EIGHT: The State Bishop Receives License Applicant Documents

WHEN the State Bishop receives your scanned or emailed documents, he will verify that the following documents are included or already in your State file.

- 1) the Church Setting Forth Conference statement;

- 2) the Pastor & Clerk endorsement statement;
- 3) your completed and signed License Application, with your passport photo and a picture of you and your spouse attached;
- 4) your Release of Information Authorization;
- 5) your Permission for Background Check Form

NEXT, he will do the following things.

First, if you have followed the process set forth in this Handbook, the State Office will already have a permanent ministry file in your name. The State Bishop will scan his copy of the “setting forth” conference into your file.

Second, he will notify you that he has received your license application. If your application is approved, the State Bishop will officially welcome you as an Applicant into the Ministry Licensure journey. He will include other appropriate information and instructions as he considers proper. He will offer his wisdom regarding the exercise of ministry under the authority of your pastor. And he will emphasize the importance of your monthly minister’s report to his office. He will also forward a copy of his letter to your Pastor/Mentor.

Normally, your mentor will be your pastor, but the State Bishop may contact you personally to discuss this matter with you. If your pastor is unable to be your mentor, then the Bishop will find an alternative mentor who is willing to work with you through this process.

Third, he will contact you by phone, email, or text message to consult with you about your choice of Mentor. If he is going to be in your area for a district meeting or visiting your local church, the Bishop may choose to speak to you personally about this.

STEP NINE: Your Ministry License Application

WHEN you have received the State Bishop’s welcome letter, you are officially recognized as a License Applicant, by the State Bishop and his Ministry Review Council. You are officially in the licensure process.

If you do not receive any contact from the State Bishop within 10 business days, from date your documents are sent, call 1-205-425-1905 and leave a kind, respectful message including:

- your name,
- why you are calling, and
- a working phone number where you can be contacted.

STEP TEN: Further Study

Write Two Essays

The purpose of these essays is to help you think through the various elements of practicing ministry for God. These essays will show the State Bishop and his Council that your idea of calling and ministry is not a personal whim. Rather, they will show that you have seriously and thoroughly considered what your personal call and ministry mean in your everyday life.

First Essay: Your Calling

This is a two-paragraph statement explaining how you know you are called and why you are convinced of that calling. Give this serious thought before committing it to paper.

Second Essay: Your Philosophy of Ministry

This is a one-page essay outlining the foundational basis of your ministry; what motivates your ministry; and how you intend to do your ministry.

WHEN you have completed these assignments, email them all to rramsey@alcogop.org.

The Foundations Course

AT THIS POINT, if you are not already enrolled in the Center for Biblical Leadership Foundations Course Ministry Development Program online, you should enroll immediately. The Foundations course is required for the ministry licensure process.

The CoGoP Ministry Polity Manual

We highly recommend that you review the current edition prior to your interview with the Ministerial Review Council. If you do not have this Manual, you can order a copy from the White Wing Book Store website.

Hermeneutics and Homiletics Videos

Access these from the alcogop.org website (if not posted there, check later for them).

Access the Hermeneutics video course from the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy online resources page. Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation, (i.e., interpreting the Bible, God's Holy Word). This video will lead you through a simple way to gain basic understanding of what a specific writer intends in a specific book, chapter, and verse.

Access the Homiletics video course from the Alabama Church of God of Prophecy online resources page. Review it together with Practice The Things, chapter 6, page 52.

STEP ELEVEN: The Ministry Review Council Interview

When the ministry candidate has completed all other licensure requirements, the State Bishop will arrange for the applicant to appear before the State Bishop and his Ministry Review Council, who will examine the applicant regarding his/her knowledge of the Scriptures, doctrine, church history, polity, personal and family devotional life, family life, personal business, financial situation, and personal standing with those outside the church.

The Ministry Review Council will ask general questions in the subjects listed above, as well as the Church of God of Prophecy Ministry Policy Manual. The applicant will be counseled as the

situation requires and as the Spirit of the Lord directs. When the MRC members have finished the interview, we will do two things.

First, we will ask you if you have any questions for the Ministry Review Council. Your questions will be answered as humbly, truthfully, and frankly as is appropriate.

Second, the Council members will lay hands on the applicant and spouse for a general prayer of blessings and encouragement. This is not an endorsement, approval, or ordination.

After the applicant is dismissed from the interview, the Council will discuss the applicant's readiness for licensure and verbally submit the Council's conclusions and recommendation to the State Bishop.

STEP TWELVE: State Bishop's Recommendation to General Presbytery

The authority of licensure is limited to the Presbytery, composed of the General Overseer and/or the General Presbyter and national/regional/State Overseers. Review boards serve in advisory roles. Upon approval by the review board, a recommendation letter will be written by the overseer to be placed in the candidate's file in the national/regional/state office, who will also forward a copy along with the Church and Pastor's Endorsement and the completed application to the General Presbyter's office. Upon receipt of the recommendation letter and other specified forms, the General Overseer/Presbyter will, after his approval, issue a license or ordination certificate and mail it to the Bishop for his signature. [Ministry Policy Manual 2018, Section One, Ministry Policies, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process—2008, II General Areas of Focus, E. Procedures for Licensure, Licensed Minister, To Complete the Foundations Course # 5, Ministry Policy Manual, h. p. 101]

After the applicant's licensure interview, the Ministry Review Council chairman will submit the Council's conclusions and recommendation in a written letter to the State Bishop. After the State Bishop has received his Ministry Review Council's written recommendation, he will proceed as follows.

- If the State Bishop agrees that the applicant needs more time in training, he will communicate that decision to the applicant and the Pastor/Mentor, with appropriate counsel and instructions. And a date will be coordinated with the applicant for a second interview by the Ministry Review Council.

Note: The license applicant may be interviewed a maximum of three times. If a license applicant is not approved for licensure after the third interview, the State Bishop and the General Presbyter may conclude that the applicant is not to be reconsidered for at least one year, at which time the candidate would be required to start from the beginning.

- If the State Bishop agrees that the applicant is qualified and ready for ministry license, he will submit the applicant's ministry file to the appropriate General Offices as outlined above, with his recommendation for licensure.

The General Presbytery will make the final licensure decision about the applicant. The General Presbyter's decision will be communicated by the State Bishop in a letter to the applicant and the Pastor.

STEP THIRTEEN: Online Reporting Through North America’s Office 365 Portal

Following licensure approval by the General Presbytery, the State Bishop will require the newly Licensed Minister to join the North America Ministries’ online tithing and reporting portal, Office 365. And the appropriate North America Ministries IT personnel will contact the new minister with login information and appropriate “how-to” instructions.

Monthly Reporting to the State Bishop’s Office is **REQUIRED**. It is not Optional. Review the **REPORTING SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY** in Chapter Eight.

STEP FOURTEEN: Ordination of the Minister

Once received from the Presiding Bishop/Presbyter, the ministry license will be presented to the new minister in a public service including prayer and “laying on of hands” by a member of the Presbytery, usually the State Bishop.

After licensing, the minister continues to be a private member of the local church and is subject to its government and discipline as prescribed by the International Assembly. However, in matters relating to his/her ministry, the minister is under the supervision of the Presbytery. The local church may take no action regarding the termination of a licensed minister. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, Ministry Policies, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process—2008, II. General Areas of Focus, F. Ordination of Licensed Ministers, p. 102]

Ordinarily, the Licensed Minister credentials are presented in the Ordination Ceremony on Friday at the next State Convention after the applicant is approved by the General Presbytery.

You will be notified by the State Bishop of the date and the time. Be certain you and your spouse are present for that ceremony. Please assemble at the appointed place (to be designated by the MRC chairman) at least 15 to 30 minutes before the ceremony begins. You will be assigned a special seat for this important occasion.

Chapter Seven

Licensure Nuts and Bolts

1. Pray seriously and fervently about your call to ministry.
2. Discuss your call and the licensure process with your pastor, spouse, and special confidante.
3. Make your timeline for completing the licensure process. Submit copies of your timeline to your mentor and the State Bishop.
4. When you have completed these steps of the process, your Pastor will ask the State Bishop for permission to proceed.

With his permission to proceed, the State Bishop will ask your Pastor to give you the official licensure documents for you to complete.

5. WHEN you receive the official documents from your pastor do the following things: (see details in chapter six)
 - 5.1 Make yourself a “Personal License File.”
 - 5.2 Complete the Release of Information Authorization.
 - 5.3 Complete the Permission for Background Check Form.
 - 5.4 Request your Character Reference letters.
 - 5.5 Read the blank License Application in its entirety to be aware of the information you will need to complete this important document.
 - 5.6 Assemble all information and data documentation necessary to accurately complete this application.
 - 5.7 Complete the Licensed Minister Application
 - 5.8 Be sure to include a 2x2 passport photo of yourself. (See details in Chapter six).
 - 5.9 Also, include a second, clear photo of you and your spouse for the State Bishop to keep in your file.

DON'T PROCRASTINATE!

This may seem pedantic to you, but the licensure process is in your hands. And the longer you procrastinate, at this point, the longer it will be for you to complete the licensure process.

Remember you are the driver in this process. This licensure process does not really begin until the State Bishop has received your completed application and sent you an acknowledgement letter.

WHEN your official application documents are completed, do the following things. First, make yourself a copy of all documents for your personal ministry file.

Second, scan the documents into an email to the state bishop at rramsey@alcogop.org

- Your completed and signed application, with all other required documents
- Include a copy of your timeline for the State Bishop.
- Keep your copies of these documents in a secure place.
- Wait for your Pastor to inform you of the setting forth conference.

Third, take a deep breath, take a relaxing break, enjoy your family and celebrate that you have completed the initial step toward your ministry credentials.

6. WAIT patiently for the State Bishop's permission to proceed (Step Six).
7. WAIT patiently for the Pastor to convene the setting forth conference (Step Seven).
8. Study, Study, and more Study (Step Ten).
9.
 - Complete the MDP Foundations course online.
 - Write your Calling essay.
 - Write your Philosophy of Ministry essay.
 - Review the Ministry Policy Manual.
 - Order and study Practice These Things

Coordinate a date and time with your Pastor/Mentor to complete each workbook and field assignments.

Any assignment that requires the State Bishop's participation should be sent to him.

10. View the Hermeneutics and Homiletics videos and complete Chapter 6, page 52 in Practice These Things.

10. Prepare for Ministry Review Council interview (Step Eleven)

Read Step Eleven carefully. The MRC interview is nothing to be afraid of. We will not make it difficult. And if you have studied and prepared as outlined in this Licensure Handbook, you will be fine. Enlist the Pastor/Mentor's help to prepare.

If your file is complete, the State Bishop will schedule your interview at a mutually convenient time for you, himself, and the Council members.

Be sure to schedule the date, time, and place. If possible, your spouse should plan to attend with you. Please be on time. Should an unavoidable hindrance occur (road construction; auto accident; a family emergency, etc), contact the Bishop via his cell phone. Your Pastor/Mentor is welcome to attend as a silent supporter, if you desire, but the Pastor's attendance is not required.

11. The State Bishop's Recommendation to the General Presbytery (Step Twelve)

After the MRC Interview, be patient while the State Bishop follows the Church of God of Prophecy's polity and protocol. It normally takes a few days, since the Presiding Bishop and the North American General Presbyter might be out of the office and traveling, perhaps out of the country.

The General Presbytery will make the final licensure decision about the applicant. The General Presbyter's decision will be communicated by the State Bishop in a letter to the applicant and the Pastor.

12. On-line Reporting (Step Thirteen)

Following licensure approval by the General Presbytery, the State Bishop will require the newly Licensed Minister to join the North America Ministries' online tithing and reporting portal, Office 365.

After the State Bishop has communicated your licensure approval to you, you will be directed to sign up for the online reporting portal. Do this immediately!

13. Ordination at the State Convention (Step Fourteen)

The State Bishop will inform you of the date, time, and venue. Habitually, the Ordination Ceremony is convened on Friday of the Convention. No matter how long before the convention, note the date on your calendar, schedule time off with your employer, and make your family and friends aware of this important event in your life.

WHEN the State Convention convenes, obtain a copy of the program, as soon as it is available, and note the day and time for the Ordination service.

Be on time with your spouse to the Ordination Service. You will be given directions for seating, as well as what to do and where to stand for the Ordination ceremony. Await your name to be called.

WHEN your name is called, proceed as directed by the Bishop or ceremony director.

WHEN all those being ordained have been prayed over in the Ordination Ceremony by the Presbytery and the Ministry Review Council, you will be directed to receive your License Certificate from the State Bishop and stand for an official picture. Your family will be permitted to make pictures also.

Then you will be asked to return to your seats for the State Bishop's commendations and the dismissal prayer.

Finally, at that point the licensure process for you is complete.

It is the hope and prayer of the State Bishop and his Ministry Review Council that this Credentials Handbook has been a help in your journey through the process.

Now, you are not finished just yet. Carefully read Chapter Eight for Important Information that is essential for Licensed Ministers in the Church of God of Prophecy. The information listed there is key to your credentials.

Also review the Glossary for any terms that are unfamiliar to you.

Chapter Eight

Important Ministry Information and Requirements

State Bishop's Jurisdiction

The general practice has been that jurisdiction over a minister (minister's license) under appointment is with their State Bishop.

For ministers not under appointment, jurisdiction follows his current place of residence—where he actually lives—and not necessarily where his membership is registered.

Church of God of Prophecy Ministers' Reporting System

Effective October 1, 1996, licensed ministers and pastors are to send the tithes of income from the ministry with their monthly reports to the state office.

Alabama Lay Ministers Who Are Not Pastors

Report monthly to the State Bishop's office and quarterly to the Local Church Conference.

Non-pastoring Lay Ministers tithe their secular income to the local church where they are members, and their ministry income to the State Bishop's office. Their Lay Minister Certificates must be renewed at the first of each calendar year.

Lay Ministers Who Are Pastors

Report monthly to the State Bishop's Office. Tithe from your ministry income is to be sent with your monthly report to the state office. And your Lay Minister Certificate must also be renewed at the first of each calendar year.

Licensed Ministers

Report monthly and send your tithe from ministry income to

Church of God of Prophecy
Attention: State Bishop
7736 Madison Blvd., Suite 209

Huntsville, AL 35806

Or report and pay online at naspogop.sharepoint.com

Note: If a minister does not report to the State Bishop for 24 consecutive months, his/her license is "lapsed."

Tithing by Ministers

A minister should not be allowed to retain a license who does not tithe on personal income. Paul's instructions to Timothy are timely in reference to this question: ". . . be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Tithing is a teaching made prominent by the Assembly. Every minister, in being examined for the ministry, stated that he/she paid tithes faithfully on all personal income. When a licensed minister in the Church fails to be an example in this matter of stewardship, it indicates a spiritual problem. It is the Presbyter's responsibility to investigate and, if possible, help the failing minister overcome this problem. If a minister does not respond to such attempts to help by repenting and resuming faithfulness in being an example of the believers, the Presbytery has no recourse but to see that his/her ministry is terminated (81st Assembly Minutes, 1986, p. 35). [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process—2008, VII. General Instructions, B. Tithing by Ministers, p. 109].

Ministers to Respect Guidance of Assembly in Doctrine

A minister should not be allowed to preach anything that brings confusion and conflicts with the doctrine of the Church. If this is done, the attention of the national/regional/state overseer should be called to it. The individual should be admonished and cited by the overseer to the findings and rulings of the International Assembly. If such a one persists and continues in the practice, then the minister should be brought before, and dealt with by, the Presbytery (54th Assembly Minutes, 1959, p. 128). [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process – 2008, VII. General Instructions, C. Ministers to Respect Guidance of Assembly in Doctrine, p. 109].

REPORTING SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY

Effective October 1, 1996, licensed ministers and pastors are to send the tithes of income from the ministry with their monthly reports to the national/regional/state office.

Note: Report forms are in the Assembly Minutes.

A. Bishops

1. Report monthly to the national/regional/state office.

B. Licensed Ministers

1. Report monthly to the national/regional/state office.

C. Deacons/Deaconesses

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference and annually to the national/regional/state office.

D. Trial Deacons/Deaconesses

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference in duplicate.
2. Duplicate report to be forwarded to the national/regional/state overseer by the church clerk.

E. Lay Ministers and Provisional Lay Pastors (Alabama Lay Ministers see note below**)**

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference in duplicate or, if pastors, monthly to national/regional/state office.
2. Duplicate report to be forwarded to the national/regional/state overseer by the church clerk.

Note: Lay ministers tithe to the local church unless they are an appointed pastor in which case they should tithe to the national/regional/state office as other pastors do. Lay ministers licenses should be renewed at the first of each calendar year at the national/regional/state office. [Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, , Section One, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Proces – 2008, VIII. Reporting System of the Ministry, A-E, p. 111-112].

NOTE: > Lay Ministers in Alabama are required to report monthly to the State Bishop's office. Since Lay Ministers are in training to gain experience and to be proven for future Licensed Minister credentials, they need to learn that monthly reporting to the State Bishop is extremely important to their respective ministries. Therefore, we would be remiss in our duty to them if we fail to emphasize this important detail in their training. Only the monthly habit of reporting can show that they are faithful in reporting.

MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE

D. Termination of Ministerial Credentials

When a minister is found guilty of an offense which is considered by the Presbytery to be serious enough to require the termination of ministry—for instance, an offense of a base and shameful nature—the Presbytery may without delay revoke the ministry in question.

Terminations may occur for the following reasons:

1. Resignation

When a minister, against whom no charges have been filed, has elected to remove him/herself from the body of licensed or ordained ministers, acceptance of the resignation is subject to the decision of the Presbytery.

2. Decease

When the death of a minister is verified, his/her name will be removed from the roll of active ministers.

3. Change of Status

When the wife of a bishop falls into sin and there is no charge against the minister himself, the Presbytery shall not change the status of his ministry to that of a licensed minister unless circumstances so warrant. If so, he shall be informed of the change. A widowed bishop who marries a wife not meeting the criteria for the wife of a bishop shall have the status of his ministry changed according to that of a licensed minister. There is to be no change of status in the case of a bishop who is widowed (82nd Assembly Minutes, 1987, p. 57).

4. Revocation

A minister who has been found guilty of or has confessed to a serious violation of biblical principles shall be disciplined; and where the nature of the case requires it, his/her ministry shall be revoked. It is understood that prior to this action, the minister shall be duly informed of the decision.

5. Lapse

Any minister who has not reported to the national/regional/state offices, or who is inactive for two consecutive years (who has not preached at least 12 times per year)—unless due to ill health, retirement, or other justifiable cause—shall be notified by the Presbytery that his/her ministry has lapsed.

6. Suspension

When a minister is censured for an offense that the Presbytery does not deem to be serious enough to warrant revocation, his/her minister's license or ordination certificate shall be held in the national/regional/state office for the period of rehabilitation. Suspension of ministry does not affect the minister's ministerial benefits, insurance, or pension. The extent to which he/she can minister shall be determined by the overseer.

[Ministry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, IX Ministerial Discipline, D. Termination of Ministerial Credentials, pgs. 117-118].

Lay Pastors Must Obtain a Provisional Permit to Solemnize Marriages

Due to the need of supplying pastors to churches in situations in which licensed ministers were in short supply or nonexistent, lay ministers and those who were called into ministry, but not yet licensed, have sometimes been given temporary, provisional permits authorizing them to do the work of pastoral ministry (baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, conduct business meetings, etc).

These provisional permits were often issued in the form of a minister's ID card. Overseers who issued these provisional permits did so with the intent that the recipient would proceed to fulfill the requirements for licensure, beginning as a lay minister. However, it has often been the case that recipients of the provisional permits were content with their status and privilege, and did not pursue a valid minister's license, continuing to execute duties designated for licensed ministers only.

Therefore, we recommend that:

- Only newly appointed lay pastors (holding valid lay ministers' certificates) may be issued provisional permits authorizing them to perform pastoral duties normally reserved for licensed ministers (to baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, and moderate business conferences, etc.), when no licensed ministers are available to pastor a church.
- The permit will authorize the lay pastor to perform these pastoral duties only in the local church to which he/she has been appointed.
- The permit will be issued in the form of a letter, with clear limitations for validity, to extend from the term of appointment (i.e. for the convention term) to not more than two years.
- During the two-year period, the lay pastor must be faithful in reporting to the state/national/regional office.
- At the end of two years, the permit will expire and will not be renewed.

- During the two-year period, the lay pastor holding the temporary ministerial permit will be expected to complete the requirements for a valid minister's license, issued by the general overseer's office.
- Lay pastors, holding lay ministers' certificates, cannot perform marriage ceremonies. However, if a couple has been previously legally married in a civil ceremony, a lay pastor may perform a Christian ceremony to bless the marriage of that couple, if they attend his/her local church.
- If, at the end of two years, the lay pastor holding a temporary provisional permit has not obtained his/her permanent minister's license, he/she may continue to serve as a lay minister, but without authorization to perform the ministry of a duly licensed pastor. [Assembly Minutes/Journal, 2018, Section 4, Reports of Committees, ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE FOR BIBLICAL DOCTRINE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY REPORT TO THE 100TH INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY JULY 18 – 22, 2018, IV. Provisional Lay Pastor Ministerial Permits Rationale, pgs. 75-76.]

General Ministerial Competencies

It is important to note that these competencies form developmental guidelines and not necessarily prescribed checklists. With the exception of our Lord, no one, not even the apostles, possessed all of these skills, abilities, and functional knowledge. Therefore, these should be used as motivation for continued growth, not as barriers to ministry.

Furthermore, it should be strongly emphasized that the mere exhibition of all these competencies would never guarantee success in ministry. Apart from calling, anointing, and a helpless dependence on the Holy Spirit, achievement of these items by an individual is of little, real value.

These competencies may be modified in order to best reflect the desired outcomes and goals of regional leadership and to meet the needs of the region's and local church's ministries. These can also serve, at all levels, as a basis for the criteria against which evaluations can be done.

In order to be fully equipped for the work of ministering, a person should know or be able to do the following:

1. Learn and practice the process of personal spiritual and character formation in developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and, in so doing, become conformed to His image.
2. Have a general knowledge of the nature, history, importance, background, and content of the Bible.
3. Have a working knowledge of the various methods of Bible study and be able to utilize these methods in their growth and ministerial work.
4. Become familiar with the various types of evangelism (personal, mass, cross-cultural, etc.), in order to be personally equipped to effectively share the gospel.
5. Develop communication skills that will enable effective interaction with other people, (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening).
6. Develop relational skills that will enable them to work effectively with those to whom and with whom they minister.
7. Understand and practice biblical principles of stewardship in regard to time, money, and service, and teach others to be committed to these principles.

8. Develop and utilize the basic skills of counseling so that a broad spectrum of people can be helped.
9. Have a working knowledge of the history of Christianity, including the major events, people, and movements that have brought Christianity to its current state.
10. Have a working knowledge of the history, polity, organization, and doctrine of the Church of God of Prophecy.
11. Understand the major issues of Christian ethics and how those issues impact the daily life of the Christian.
12. Be aware of ways in which the Christian faith can be lived out practically, not just theoretically, by developing and participating in practical ministries that relate to the actual life situations of people.
13. Learn and practice the skills necessary to be a lifelong learner, so that the process of personal development can continue.
14. Be knowledgeable of the major issues of systematic theology and relate them to the lives of those to whom they minister.
15. Develop the leadership and appropriate administrative skills necessary to carry out ministry in the church and world. These competencies are considered of such vital importance that all who acknowledge a call to, or gifting for, any area of ministry, lay or professional, should strive to develop them. [re: Ministry Policy Manual. (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House), 2016, 72-73].

Required Forms

Lay Ministry Certificate

You can obtain the forms listed below from the state office or online at www.alcogop.org

These are necessary to complete the procedure to receive the Lay Minister Certificate:

- Lay Minister's Application Form
- Permission to Obtain Background Check

Licensed Minister

You can obtain the forms listed below from the State Office or online at www.alcogop.org

These are necessary to complete the procedure to receive Minister License:

- Permission to obtain Background Check
- Church and Pastor's Endorsement Form
- Authorization to Release Information Form
- Ministry License Application Form

For All License applicants and candidates

If you have previous marriages and divorces, then you will be required to complete a Marriage/Divorce questionnaire. If this form is needed, the State Bishop will send it to you with instructions.

Glossary

Applicant. This is the individual who is seeking to receive a Lay Minister Certificate or to be credentialed as a Licensed Minister by the CGP.

Candidate. For purposes of this credentialing procedure, a Candidate is the individual who has completed all licensure requirements. The Candidate's file is complete at the State Office, and the State Bishop has informed the minister of candidacy for ministry licensure. The Candidate is invited to an interview with the Ministry Review Council.

NOTE: in the Church of God of Prophecy official documents (Assembly Minutes, etc), the term "candidate" is generally used to mean any license applicant.

CGP. The initials of the Church of God of Prophecy

Competencies. The demonstrations of sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill, and strength to fulfill the duties assigned.

Credentials. These are the official licenses issued by the CGP at the local church, state, regional, and national levels. They certify that the licensed minister is entitled to exercise the specific aspects of ministry listed on the issued license document. Both Lay Minister and Licensed Minister credentials carry some limitations.

Lapsed license. This means that the minister's license is no longer valid.

Lay Minister. This is a ministry novice who is entering ministry training. The Lay Minister serves under the supervision of a local church Pastor. See Lay Minister authorization on page 13 of this manual.

Licensed Minister. This is a mature minister who has followed the credentialing procedure, has received a Minister License, and has been ordained at the State Convention. See Licensed Minister authorization on page 18 of this manual.

Credentialing Procedure. The step-by-step process through which the license applicant goes in order to be credentialed by the CGP in this state.

Mentor. The person who will walk with you through the credentialing procedure. A mentor guides, teaches, and trains.

Ministry Review Council. This is the team of Senior Pastors appointed by the State Bishop to assist him with the credentialing procedure of prospective applicants set forth by a local church in Business Conference.

Polity. The form of government of the Church of God of Prophecy.

State Bishop. This term refers to the office or position formerly referred to as State Overseer. He oversees all the pastors, licensed ministers, and CoGoP congregations in his respective state.

North American General Presbyter. This term refers to the office or position of the Bishop who oversees all the State Bishops of North America (United States and Canada).

Presiding Bishop. This term refers to the office or position formerly referred to as General Overseer. He oversees all Churches of God of Prophecy globally and their related ministries.