



STRONGER TOGETHER

**Ohio ~ West Virginia
Church of God of Prophecy**

**Ministry
Credentials and Licensure
Handbook**

Ministry Credentials and Licensure Handbook
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Church of God of Prophecy

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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. It has been a passion of Bishop Clint Knowles to adopt a handbook and specific protocol for the region of Ohio ~ West Virginia.

Our goal from the beginning was to summarize what we understood to be essential for the credentialing procedure. Yet we never put the information in a booklet to be used by pastors and prospective ministers.

Our primary work is to function as an advisory council that assists the Regional Bishop with various ministry issues as mandated by the International Assembly. In addition, we interview ministry applicants for credentials in the Church of God of Prophecy [COGOP] when they have completed the licensure process. And after the interview, we provide a unified recommendation concerning the interviewed applicant to the Regional Bishop. So, with the Regional Bishop's agreement we think that "Ministerial Review Council" [MRC] better defines our work.

I am aware 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.

Though licensure is an individual issue, the path to receiving credentials and ordination in the Church of God of Prophecy does not deviate from applicant to applicant. Everyone is responsible to complete identical applications; fulfill identical requirements; covenant to teach, preach, and practice identical COGOP doctrine and polity; submissively tithe income; report monthly; faithfully cooperate with the Regional Bishop; and follow the same uniform licensure trail as everyone else. No COGOP minister is exempt from these. The credentialing procedure shows no favoritism or special status.

In turn, the primary role of the Ministry Review Council, by the direction and supervision of the Regional 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.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This handbook 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 adjusted from time to time as licensure requirements change.

In this handbook, we have compiled a succinct outline of the licensure process for the license applicant. The COGOP 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 successfully receive credentials 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 route to receiving a ministry license.

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 for ministry credentials; (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 Regional 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 Lead 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 a time frame involved. At present, the Regional Bishop and the MRC expect the lay ministry applicant to serve a one-year-term of ministry service under the mentorship of a lead 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 license applicant will begin and complete the licensure process within the next 12 - 18 months. 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 we take full responsibility for this handbook and any grammatical or typographical errors therein.

We regret that this initial volume is necessarily the experimental one. The disadvantage is that we may not have included an essential element, despite our efforts to be understanding. In addition, we have, out of necessity, repeated some information in our effort 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 making any effort to complete an individual requirement. 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 COGOP heritage and familiarity. See the Glossary at the end of this manual for any unclear technical terms. And, we have referenced most places where we directly cite COGOP International Assembly polity, rulings, and instructions. All citations are the currently official stand of the COGOP and are cited from the Ministry Policy Manual, 2018. As we discover citations that have not been properly referenced, we will correct those in future revisions of the Handbook.

“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

To be licensed and credentialed for ministry in the Ohio ~ West Virginia 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 essential 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 region of Ohio ~ West Virginia. Ministers who pursue ministry credentials, with few exceptions, do so by first obtaining a lay ministry certificate.

The Regional Bishop may make an exception for ministers joining the Church of God of Prophecy who hold credentials in another organization. There are 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 Regional Bishop will determine which steps, of the Church of God of Prophecy licensure process, have been previously completed by the joining minister. The Regional Bishop, with his Ministerial Review Council, will interview the joining ministers to determine their qualifications and their spiritual maturity and doctrinal agreement.

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 Regional 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. Do not let those who are not pursuing ministry licenses 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 challenging work involved in the licensure process. Do not be one of those people.
- Some applicants allow others to influence them into emotional, impatient attitudes. Do not let others influence you in this manner. If you have questions, contact your pastor/mentor or the Ministerial Review Council for the answers.
- We lack trained mentors. Some pastors do not want to be a mentor. The Regional Bishop will help you connect with a mentor.

Perspectives

Our Regional 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 only one person who gets exhausted, just as you do, has family obligations, just as you do, and carries the heavy weight of oversight for all our churches.

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

So, the point is this: your Regional Bishop and the Ministerial 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 COGOP. We hope you will decide to commit yourself to completing the licensure process.

We all understand that some financial expense is involved in ministry licensure. A book or two may be required to read. The Regional Bishop and the Ministry Review Council have compiled a package of all the materials you may be required to study and complete in your journey to ministry licensure.

There is a monetary cost for these materials. When your ministry application and payment have been received in the Regional Bishop's office, the material will be shipped to you. Some materials are online and can be resourced by those means.

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 Regional Bishop, who will determine whether special considerations are in order. Special needs are such things as pregnancy, sight impairment or other special needs 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 demanding work and commitment involved.

Along with your spouse, if applicable, 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 Regional Bishop and the Ministerial 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 Regional 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 Ohio ~ West Virginia to be fully licensed and ordained.

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 Regional Bishop and the Ministerial Review Council will verify your faithfulness, with both your pastor and the church treasurer. There must be unmistakable 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 you might”* (Eccl. 9:10 ESV).

Some examples of hands-on involvement are picking up trash on church properties (inside and outside); cleaning church toilets; mowing church lawn; sweep, mop, and vacuum church floors; teach Sunday School classes, do community outreach, etc. Servanthood is key. Do not 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 calling! Carefully consider whether you are truly called. A divine call is more than an 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 benefit from 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 (1 Sam. 3). David could point back to his call to be king (1 Sam. 16:13). Peter, Andrew, James, and John could point back to their calls (Mt. 4:18-19 & 21). And Saul/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, deride you, sneer at you, deride you, criticize you, question your motives, reject your calling, and 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

International 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 Bishop 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

Ohio ~ West Virginia Lay Ministers Are Required to Report Monthly to the Regional 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 Ohio ~ West Virginia COGOP Regional 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 Regional 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 state/regional/national Bishop. 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.

STEP TWO, if your Pastor recognizes the call of God on your life, he/she will communicate with the Regional Bishop and initiate the process. 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. Be certain to put the date and time in your calendar and be certain to attend this conference. Once your local church has transacted the setting forth conference, your Pastor and the Church Clerk will complete and sign the proper Endorsement document, electronically.

STEP THREE, your pastor will submit to the Regional Bishop your email address. When you receive electronically the Lay Minister Application, thoroughly read it to clarify all the information you will need. Assemble all the required information 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 Regional Bishop and the Ministry Review Council that you have neither ignored nor inadvertently missed a question. Click submit when you have completed.

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

Next, complete the Release of Information Authorization document. Be certain this document is complete and accurate. It will be sent to you electronically.

Next, complete, sign and date the Permission to Obtain Background Check form. It will be sent to you electronically. Be certain that this form is complete, and all information is accurate and true.

When the Regional Bishop receives your lay minister packet from you, he will do the following things:

- He will open an electronic minister's file in your name and scan any copies of your lay minister documents into the file. This file will be your permanent ministry file in the Ohio ~ West Virginia Church of God of Prophecy Regional 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 Regional 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 Regional Bishop may contact you personally to discuss this matter with you. If your pastor is unable to be your mentor, then the Regional Bishop will find an alternative mentor who is willing to work with you through this process.

Issuance of Lay Minister Certificate

When your Lay Minister application is approved, the Regional 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.

The Regional Bishop will write a letter of commendation to the new Lay Minister and will include instructions to the Lay Minister regarding the exercise of the ministry, under the guidance of the pastor.

Certificate Presentation, and Installation

After receiving the Lay Minister Certificate from the Regional 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 lead pastor, before being eligible to be set forth as a Licensed Minister.

Although the Lay Minister is not required to complete the Ministry Development Program [MDP], it is highly recommended since it will be required for the Licensed Minister credential.

After you have received confirmation from the Regional Bishop that your application has been received and accepted, you are ready to continue to Step 4.

STEP FOUR, Now, you will need the Licensure Materials Package. Go online to www.ohwvcogop.org/ministrylicense and select Lay Ministry Certificate. There you will find a Materials document that lists all the required study materials for the Church of God of Prophecy licensure process, and the cost for the package. You are now ready to order the package. Submit licensure fee (preferred method of choice is using the online pay portal) of the OH ~ WV Church of God of Prophecy, in the amount required for the Licensure Materials package. If paying online is not an option for you, mail a check in the amount of \$50.00 to *Church of God of Prophecy Attn: Ministerial Review Council PO Box 1010, Reynoldsburg OH 43068*. When your order is received and paid in full, the Regional Office will ship your materials to you. This package will include everything you will need to study and qualify for your Church of God of Prophecy ministry credentials.

STEP FIVE, Complete your timeline for completion of your Lay Minister's Certificate. This can be done using the online form located at <https://www.ohwvcogop.org/lay-minister-timeline>. A copy of your tentative timeline will assure your pastor and the Regional Bishop that you are serious about obtaining a Lay Minister Certificate. It can also serve as your personal motivation since you know the Regional Bishop has a copy and is monitoring your progress.

STEP SIX, The Lay Minister's Actions

Your Licensure Materials Package arrives.

- Open your materials package and verify that all materials listed on the enclosed invoice are included.
- Keep this materials package in a secure place for easy access. These materials are required for the licensure process. Do not misplace them. They will also offer invaluable assistance to your ministry. If you choose not to do the MDP at this time, be certain to keep the information on creating an account online in a secure place for later licensure requirements.
- There will be two copies of *Practice These Things: Mentor Ministry Workbook*. One copy for yourself and one for your Pastor/Mentor. This is a requirement for your Lay Minister Certificate.
- Complete your first writing assignment. You can find the required document at <https://www.ohwvcogop.org/my-calling-assignment>.

- Schedule mutually convenient times to 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 ***Practice These Things*** 11 lessons are read and the assignments completed, you must submit all completed assignments to the Regional Bishop. All the assignments must be completed and mailed or emailed together in one mailing. These assignments will become a part of the applicant's permanent ministry file. Please remember this is to be a 12-month process to complete.

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” 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 Presiding Bishop’s Office receives approval from the National/Regional/State Bishop’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 Regional Bishop’s permission for a special permit to solemnize the rites of matrimony. This special permit is sent from the Presiding Bishop’s office and may be rescinded at any time by the Regional Bishop and Presiding Bishop.

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

Regional 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 Regional 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. Some sections of the Ministry Development Program (MDP) will be required.

At this level you have either completed the Lay Ministry Certificate 1-yr training period, or the Regional 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 Regional 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, but you are not the lead pastor, the Regional Bishop will establish an electronic ministry file in your name and ask you to submit the following forms electronically: Licensed Minister application, your Release of Information Authorization, and the Permission to Obtain Background Check form. It will be your permanent ministry file in the Ohio ~ West Virginia Church of God of Prophecy regional office. When the Regional 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.

Chapter Seven

The Licensed Minister Procedure

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 Regional Bishop stating the desire 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. We advise to address the pastor's concerns honestly and openly.

If the Regional 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.].

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 – profoundly serious – and requires spiritual and professional comportment. You do not have to be the silent type, BUT you do not want to be a clown or buffoon either.

Your outward 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. Pay attention to all grooming details. These habits seem normal, but many do not place attention to details such as hair, teeth, facial hair for men, and body odor. 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 Proceed with Setting Forth Conference

WHEN you have 1) served the minimum of one year as a Lay Minister, 2) completed the requirements and assignments of Lay Minister Certificate stage, 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 stating his intent to proceed to the next step of recommending you to the local church as an applicant for the Licensed Minister credentials.

WHEN the Regional Bishop receives your Pastor's notification to proceed with the licensure process, he will examine your permanent file established when you began the Lay Minister process. The Regional Bishop will examine your file to confirm the below items:

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

NEXT, the Regional Bishop will communicate his findings to your Pastor. If your file is incomplete, then he will notify you with his rationale and instructions. If your file is up to date, the Regional Bishop will notify your Pastor to proceed to the setting forth 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 Regional 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.

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 electronically.

STEP THREE: Now you will need the Licensure Materials Package

Go online to www.ohwvcogop.org/ministrylicense and select Licensed Ministry. There you will find a Materials document that lists all the required study materials for the Church of God of Prophecy licensure process, and the cost for the package. You are now ready to order the package. Submit licensure fee (preferred method of choice is using the online pay portal) of the OH ~ WV Church of God of Prophecy, in the amount required for the Licensure Materials package. If paying online is not an option for you, mail a check in the amount of \$50.00 to *Church of God of Prophecy, Attn: Ministerial Review Council PO Box 1010, Reynoldsburg OH 43068*. When your order is received and paid in full, the Regional Office will ship your materials to you. This package will include

everything you will need to study and qualify for your Church of God of Prophecy ministry credentials.

STEP FOUR: Important Licensure Documents

1. Licensed Minister Application
2. Release of Information Authorization
3. Permission for Background Check Form
4. Three Character References

If you entered the process at the lay minister level, #2 and #3 should have already been submitted. If for some reason the above action items have not been completed, do so immediately. Not doing so could delay the process.

If, as a Participant, you are entering the process from another religious organization or as a transfer from another state or region, you will need to follow the above step as instructed below.

When you begin completing the application, do not leave any information spaces blank. Show the Regional 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.

Items 1-3 will be completed electronically. Item 4 will be mailed or emailed to the Regional Office when completed (Email is preferred choice).

All Level of Participants must follow through with this important task!

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.

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

Assemble all information and data documentation necessary to accurately complete this application that cannot be electronically sent and mail to the Regional Office using above mailing address.

DON'T PROCRASTINATE!

STEP FIVE: Make Your Licensure Plan and Timeline

Write out your plan step-by-step with deadline dates for completing each step. The procedure outlined in this manual provides you with a basic plan, all you need to do is set dates, times, and deadlines for completing your plan. See the example provided online at <https://www.ohwvcogop.org/licensed-minister-timeline>. If you were in the Lay Minister process, you are familiar with this procedure.

A copy of your “licensure plan” will be submitted to the Regional Bishop and your Pastor or Mentor. This is a personal commitment. You have decided and acted. You are explicitly stating to your Pastor/Mentor and to the Regional Bishop that you are going all the way. And knowing that the Regional Bishop and Pastor/Mentor has a copy of your timeline, and is tracking your progress, will give you incentive when the journey seems hard.

STEP SIX: The Regional Bishop Receives License Applicant Documents

WHEN the Regional Bishop receives your documents, he will verify the documents are included or already in your regional file. Below is a list of items the Regional Bishop will be verifying.

- 1) The Church Setting Forth Conference statement,
- 2) The Pastor & Clerk endorsement statement,
- 3) Your completed and signed License Application, with your passport photo,
- 4) Your Release of Information Authorization,
- 5) Your Permission for Background Check Form,
- 6) Your licensing fee has been remitted.

Most of the above documents will be completed electronically.

NEXT, he will do the following things.

First, if you have followed the process set forth in this Handbook, the Regional Office already has a permanent ministry file in your name. The Regional 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 Regional 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.

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 Regional Bishop may choose to speak to you personally about this.

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

STEP SEVEN: Your Ministry License Application

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

If you do not receive any contact from the Regional Bishop within 10 business days, from date your documents are finalized, call 1-614-759-6072 and leave a kind, respectful message including:

- Your name
- Why you are calling
- A working phone number where you can be contacted.

STEP EIGHT: 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 Regional 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.

These can be submitted online through the website at www.ohwvcogop.org/furtherstudy.

The Ministry Development Program

If you are not already enrolled in the MDP, it is now time to enroll online and begin your studies. These classes are self-guided. When you have completed all the materials. The Regional Bishop will be contacted by the Leadership Development Department of International Offices of your satisfactory completion. You can access the MDP at www.ohwvcogop.org/furtherstudy.

*NOTE: there are required readings at this level.

STEP NINE: The Ministry Review Council Interview

When the ministry candidate has completed all other licensure requirements, the Regional Bishop will arrange for the applicant to appear before the Regional Bishop and his Ministerial 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 Ministerial Review Council will ask broad 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, they will do two things.

First, we will ask you if you have any questions for the Ministerial 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 Regional Bishop.

STEP TEN: Regional Bishop's Recommendation to General Presbytery

After the applicant's licensure interview, the Ministerial Review Council chair will submit the Council's conclusions and recommendation in a writing to the Regional Bishop. After the Regional Bishop has received his Ministerial Review Council's written recommendation, he will proceed as follows:

- If the Regional 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 Ministerial Review Council.

The authority of licensure is limited to the Presbytery, composed of the Presiding Bishop and/or the General Presbyter and National/Regional/State Bishops. 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 Presiding Bishop/Presbyter will, after his approval, issue a license or ordination certificate and mail it to the National/Regional/State 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]

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 Regional 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 Regional 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 Regional Bishop to the applicant and the Pastor.

STEP ELEVEN: Online Reporting Through North America's Office 365 Portal

Following licensure approval by the General Presbytery, the Regional Bishop will require the newly Licensed Minister to continue online tithing and reporting. Monthly Reporting to the Regional Bishop's Office is REQUIRED. It is not Optional. Review the REPORTING SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY in Chapter Eight.

STEP TWELVE: 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 Regional Overseer.

Ordinarily, the Licensed Minister credentials are presented in the Ordination Ceremony at the next Regional Convention after the applicant is approved by the General Presbytery. You will be notified by the Regional 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 chair) at least 15 to 30 minutes before the ceremony begins. You will be assigned a special seat for this important occasion.

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]

Chapter Eight

Important Ministry

Information and Requirements

Regional Bishop's Jurisdiction

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

For ministers not under appointment, jurisdiction follows his current place of residence—where he 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 electronically send the tithes of income from the ministry with their monthly reports to the Regional Office.

Ohio ~ West Virginia Lay Ministers Who Are Not Pastors

Report monthly by means of electronic to the Regional 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 Regional 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 Regional Bishop's Office. Tithe from your ministry income is to be sent electronically with your monthly report to the Regional Office. 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 the Regional Office by means of electronic.

Note: If a minister does not report to the Regional Bishop for 12 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 matter: ". . . 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 Bishop 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 (Ohio ~ West Virginia Lay Ministers see note below)

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference and monthly to the National/Regional/State Office

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. [Mistry Policy Manual, 2018, Section One, Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process – 2008, VIII. Reporting System of the Ministry, A-E, p. 111-112].

NOTE: Lay Ministers in Ohio ~ West Virginia are required to report monthly to the Regional 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 Regional 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. And telling or even constant re-telling is not sufficient to prove their faithfulness in this matter. Only the monthly habit of reporting can show that they are faithful in reporting.

MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE

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.

National/Regional/State Bishops 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 National/Regional/State 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 Presiding Bishop'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. Except for our Lord, no one, not even the apostles, possessed all 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 to best reflect the desired outcomes and goals of regional leadership and to meet the needs of the regions and local church's ministries. These can also serve, at all levels, as a basis for the criteria against which evaluations can be done.

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 diverse 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 regarding 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 key 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 key 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 Regional Office. They will be sent electronically to be completed

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

- Lay Minister's Application Form
- Permission to Obtain Background Check
- Church and Pastor's Endorsement Form
- Authorization to Release Information Form

Licensed Minister

You can obtain the forms listed below from the Regional Office. They will be sent electronically to be completed.

These are necessary to complete the procedure to receive a 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 Regional Bishop will send it to you electronically, 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 COGOP.

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 Regional Office, and the Regional 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 used to mean any license applicant.

COGOP. 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 COGOP 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 10 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 Regional Convention. See Licensed Minister authorization on page 15 of this manual.

Credentialing Procedure. The step-by-step process through which the license applicant goes to be credentialed by the COGOP in this region.

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

Ministerial Review Council. This is the team of Lead Pastors appointed by the Regional 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.

Regional Bishop. This term refers to the office or position formerly referred to as Regional Overseer.

Addendum

I would like to honor the work of Bishop Wayne Pense for his help and encouragement to be a forward-thinking Bishop. He would always say, "Write it down and make it plain." His inspiration and devotion to be "better" will forever influence me in ministry.

Next, I would like to thank Bishop Dr. Sylvester Smith and the Alabama Ministerial Review Council for their many hours of labor and love in creating the very first Ministry License Handbook to be published for the equipping of ministers on all levels. You folks set the bar in standard and purpose. Thanks to Dr. Smith and his team from Alabama State Church of God of Prophecy for use of their handbook as a tool and guide. Your encouragement, guidance, and collaborative work is very appreciative. "We are one body and members in particular."

Lastly, a big thank you to Ohio ~ West Virginia Ministerial Review Council for their belief, support, and proof reading. Personally, I would like to thank Bishop Mike Morgan for his ability to think outside the box, read my mind and heart. Your work on this project was above and beyond.

Materials List

Lay Ministry

- 2 copies of “Practice These Things” Brian T Sutton
- Writing Assignment:
 - “My Calling”

Ministry

- Enroll in Ministry Development Program (MDP)
- “*Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today*”, Scott M. Gibson & Matthew D Kim
- “*Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry*”, Charles A Tidwell
- “*Pray Then Preach*”, E.M. Bounds
- “*The Lost Link*”, R.G. Spurling
- Writing Assignment:
 - “My Calling”
 - “My Philosophy of Ministry”