



indianaministries

Indiana Ministries of the Church of God

Ordination and Licensing

Information

13300 Olio Road, Suite 303

Fishers, Indiana 46037

Phone: 317.773.6477

Fax: 317.773-6570

www.indianaministries.org

Credentials Coordinator:

Jenene Lighty


jlifty@indianaministries.org

Thank you for your request for information on ordination. The Church of God offers ministerial recognitions in the form of Ministerial Commission, Ministerial License and Ministerial Ordination. Listed below are the steps included in the application process for ministerial recognition with Indiana Ministries of the Church of God:

1. **Application/Release**: At your earliest opportunity, please return to Indiana Ministries your completed Application, completed Background Check Authorization, Release of Information, a photograph/snapshot of yourself (we prefer you email this), and your \$125 application. The non-refundable application fee covers the costs of a background check, credit check and assessment inventories.
2. **Bible Discovery Tool** – Before you receive any credential you will need to successfully complete this multiple choice and true/false Bible content exam that covers the most basic Bible teachings. You can take this exam on the same day that you meet with an ordination and licensing committee or you can contact me at your convenience for instructions and options on taking this exam.
3. **Endorsement Forms** –The enclosed Endorsement Forms are to be completed by six individuals (*non-relatives*) of your choice. *Four of the endorsers must be Church of God ordained leaders, ministers or professors*; the remaining two may be other individuals who have known you long enough to serve as valuable references. (If you are from another faith group, other ordained ministerial references are acceptable.) Please be sure to fill out line 1 and sign on line 2 of each form and distribute the forms to the individuals you have selected with instructions that their completed Endorsement Forms are to be sent directly to Indiana Ministries in the envelope provided.
4. **Your Call into Ministry** – Please write a letter (return to the Indiana Ministries office via email) to your ordination & licensing committee that will tell us of your call into vocational ministry. This should be a simple two to three paragraph writing. This is a way for the Ordination and Licensing Committee to know more about you before you meet.
5. **Advocate** – Please familiarize yourself with the Advocate Policy and inform me of whom your Advocate will be.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need additional information. My email address is: jlighty@indianaministries.org May the Lord bless your search for His will in your life.

Yours in Christ,



Jenene Lighty
Credential & Financial Services



Dear Ordination Candidate:

Welcome! We are so pleased that you have made the decision to pursue ordination in the Church of God in Indiana. Indiana Ministries' greatest desire is that the ordination process is a positive experience for you. We hope this foundational time in your ministry will not only expand your knowledge and understanding of ministry but will be an encouraging experience.

Our desire is that you complete the entire process, from commissioning to ordination, in no more than three years. Whether that time frame is shortened or extended is largely dependent on your efforts. Please understand we cannot push you through. You are responsible for your efforts. Though the Ordination and Licensing Committee can give guidance in each step, they cannot do your work for you. We are sure you have not taken the call from God into ministry lightly. With that in mind, know that we too value the high calling to ministry in the kingdom of God; therefore, we take great care and effort to make sure those going through the process are ready for ministry in today's world.

We look forward to meeting you and working with you in the days ahead!

The Staff of Indiana Ministries

CREDENTIALING PROCESS

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

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

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

- Salvation - as evidenced by a holy lifestyle
- Evidence of the call of God - a divine appointment to Christian ministry
- A demonstrated need for vocational credentials
- Fellowship and involvement in a local congregation of the Church of God movement
- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding through use of the Bible Content Discovery Survey

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

Credentialing at whatever level signifies a covenant relationship between...

the minister and the credentialing body,
the minister and ministerial peers,
the minister and the church at large,
the minister and the local church being served, and
the minister and God.

Assuring the integrity of each of these covenant relationships rests on patterns of mutual accountability (*Credentials Manual of the Church of God, 2007 revised edition, pp. 14-15*).

COMMISSION:

The purpose of commissioning is to recognize and support one who articulates a sense of call to ministry. It grants a preliminary ministerial status and inclusion on the approved list. Credentialing bodies may commission a person for terms of one or two years, at their discretion, depending on circumstances and the qualifications. Terms are renewable as the credentialing committee may judge appropriate.

A commission is given on the condition of an annual review by the credentialing body. It may be voided by action of the credentialing body if deemed advisable. It may be renewed so long as the credentialing body judges the minister worthy of such continuing credentialing. Being commissioned does not necessarily imply that the candidate eventually will be licensed and/or ordained (*Credentials Manual of the Church of God, 2007 revised edition, p. 15*).

LICENSING:

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

Credentialing bodies may license ministers for terms of one or two years, at their discretion, depending on circumstances and the qualifications of the minister. A license is given on the condition of an annual review by the credentialing body. It may be voided by action of the credentialing body if deemed advisable. It may be renewed if the credentialing body judges the minister worthy of such continuing credentialing (*Credentials Manual of the Church of God, 2007 revised edition*, pp. 15-16).

ORDINATION:

Ordination, the final step of vocational credentialing, recognizes a minister's call and vocational commitment to the Christian ministry. It provides for accountability to the appropriate credentialing body and also satisfies certain legal requirements of the state or province. Ordination usually is needed by persons who serve as leaders of local congregations, in institutional ministries, missionary endeavors, and certain other formal capacities. Ordination is to be granted only when it is strategic to performance of vocational ministry to which one is called, and when its recipient is found suitable for ordination by virtue of divine call, appropriate character, spirit, commitment, preparation, beliefs, and performance (*Credentials Manual of the Church of God, 2007 revised edition*, p. 16).

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CREDENTIALING VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTERS:

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

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

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

(*Credentials Manual of the Church of God, 2007 revised edition*, segments from pp. 21-29)

Summary of the Ordination Process in Indiana



indianaministries

1. Letter of Intention: The ministerial candidate sends a letter of intention to Indiana Ministries. This can be in an email or even a phone call.
2. Application and Authorization Forms Provided: Application, Release, Background check, endorsement forms, other application information made available to candidate.
3. Advocate: The ministerial candidate needs an ordained Church of God minister to sponsor and endorse the candidate. Your Advocate should come with you to your initial interview.
4. Background Checks and Forms collected: Application with payment, endorsements, a paper on "Your Call into Vocational Ministry", and picture are turned in to the Credentials Coordinator at Indiana Ministries.
5. Bible Discovery Tool: administration of the Bible Discovery Exam takes place during the application period or at the time of your first appointment with the Committee.
6. Initial Interview: When the application process and all necessary forms and reports have been satisfactorily completed and received, the Credentials Coordinator will make you (and spouse, if married) an appointment for an initial interview.
7. Decision Regarding Credentialing: Based on the results of the interview and the completed materials, the credentialing committee decides either to credential or to delay or deny credentials.
8. Commissioning: If the decision is to credential, a two year commission is issued.
9. Coach Assigned or Chosen: For the commissioned minister, the credentialing committee assigns or requests that the candidate suggest a coach. Coaches must be approved by the Committee Chairperson of the Committee you are assigned to.
10. Coach and Commissioned Minister Meet: The coach and candidate meet together a minimum of once a quarter for at least a year. The coach submits a report to the committee prior to your next appointment.
11. Reading Assignments and Theological Statements: The commissioned minister prepares reflection papers on books assigned as well as prepares written statements on the fourteen theological subject areas. These statements must be judged satisfactory prior to licensing. The candidate may also be required to meet other requirements in the various areas of qualification, including motivational, more and ethical, theological and biblical, dispositional and relational, educational, and vocational.
12. Decision Regarding Licensing: After assignments are complete and a coach report is submitted, a second interview with the credentialing committee is held. Based in large part on the coach report, the written theological statements, reflection papers, and any other assignments, the credentialing committee decides to license, to extend the commission, or to suspend credentialing.
13. Licensing: If licensing is approved, the licensed minister prepares and submits to the credentialing committee a Life & Ministry Plan (LAMP). The licensed minister begins working with a **mentor**. This is a more intense relationship than a coach. A minimum of 6-8 meetings within a year. The mentor will submit a final report to the committee.
14. The Decision Regarding Ordination: Based in part on the mentor's reports and the LAMP submitted, the credentialing committee decides on a recommendation to either ordain, postpone ordination and renew the license, deny ordination and renew the license, or deny both ordination and license renewal.

INDIANA MINISTRIES – CREDENTIALING ADVOCATE
Department of Ministry Services
Ordination and Licensing Committee(s)



Beginning in 2010 each Ordination and Licensing candidate will require an Advocate.

An advocate is a Church of God (COG) ordained minister who sponsors, represents, endorses, and supports the potential candidate. The creation of a credentialing advocate is to ensure an experienced COG ordained minister take personal responsibility to declare the potential candidate is ready and prepared to seek formal credentialing. A credentialing advocate will serve the ordinand for a minimum of one (1) year, after which a coach or mentor will be assigned. The advocate can serve as the candidates coach or mentor. The credentialing advocate can be the candidate's pastor. Most important is that the advocate be intimately acquainted with the candidates' ministry.

Upon receipt of the letter of intention, the credentialing committee coordinator will ensure the necessary application forms and instructions are mailed to the potential candidate for action. After receipt of the completed documents, the credentials coordinator will invite the potential candidate and credentialing advocate to meet with the appropriate credentialing committee (Section 3.15, Credentialing Manual) for an initial interview.

Every potential ordinand must be introduced to the credentialing committee at their initial interview by a COG ordained minister serving as credentialing advocate who can affirm, substantiate the person's life, and calling to Christian ministry. The COG ordained minister may or may not be the candidate's senior pastor, but is a part of the local congregation or religious organization. This credentialing advocate may or may not be different from the coach or mentor (Section 3.21 and 3.22, Credentialing Manual).

Once the candidate is accepted into the credentialing process after the initial interview, they will continue in the process as delineated in Section 3.16, Credentialing Manual and following.

INDIANA MINISTRIES MINISTERIAL RECOGNITION APPLICATION

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Numbers – Home: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Email Address: _____

How long have you lived at your current address? _____

With what congregation do you currently worship? _____

Are you seeking credentials for Vocational Ministry (Ordination)? Yes No

For what ministry are you seeking recognition?

Pastor Worship and the Arts Christian Education Missions Chaplain

Pastoral Care Ecumenical Ministry Associate Pastor in _____

Other _____

Occupational History: Present Occupation: _____

Places Worked	Length of Service (Dates)	Type of Work
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

Military Service: Branch of Service: _____ Rank: _____ Years: _____

What was the nature of your discharge? _____

Christian Experience: How long have you been a Christian? _____ Year baptized? _____

Where were you baptized? _____ By whom? _____

By what manner were you baptized? _____

When did you sense your call to the ministry? _____

From whom have you sought advice? _____

Personal Concerns: Have you ever been arrested? Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

Do we have your permission to do a background check on you? Yes No

Would you be willing to receive a psychological assessment? Yes No

To the best of your knowledge, do you hold any doctrinal differences with the teachings commonly held in the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)? _____

What is your sexual orientation? _____

Church Background and Beliefs: Have you been affiliated with groups other than the Church of God?

Yes No Explain: _____

What are your current responsibilities in your home congregation? _____

In what specific interchurch work have you been active? _____

With what pastors have you worked? _____

Please list church work experience (preaching, teaching, etc.)

Educational Background

High School graduate? Yes No Name of school: _____ Year graduated: _____

College graduate? Yes No Name of school: _____ Year graduated: _____

List degree earned and major, or if applies, any years completed: _____

Seminary graduate? Yes No Name of school: _____ Year graduated: _____

List degree earned and major, or if applies, any years completed: _____

List any other graduate education and area of study: _____

What further educational plans do you have? _____

What books are you now reading? _____

Are you willing to take prescribed courses of study in preparation for ordination? Yes No

Relationships: What is your understanding of the work of Indiana Ministries? _____

In what ways do you intend to be related to Indiana Ministries? _____

What are your convictions about ecumenical relationships? _____

Family Information: Name of spouse: _____ Date of Marriage: _____

Have you been previously married? Yes No How many previous marriages? _____

Cause of Separation: _____ Date of Divorce: _____

Please list names of your children and year they were born: _____

Education of spouse: _____

Describe the attitude of spouse toward your interest in ministry: _____

Ministerial Endorsement: Please give as reference the name and contact information of your pastor: _____

RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

Indiana Ministries of the Church of God

I give consent for the Department of Ministries Services (DMS) and the Ordination and Licensing Committee(s) of Indiana Ministries of the Church of God (IMCOG) to request, receive, and maintain applications, letters, references, forms, testing result documents, and other information in regards to my commissioning, licensing, and ordination process and my ministerial service. Such items of information will be maintained by Indiana Ministries of the Church of God in a permanent file bearing my name. I understand that I may view the file (Exception: Any document that I have relinquished the right to view) in the presence of an appointed representative from the DMS but that I may not photocopy or remove any materials.

Further, I understand that materials placed in my file will become the property of IMCOG with the DMS (or a succeeding body designated by IMCOG) acting as the agent for all credentialing matters.

Should I transfer to a jurisdiction other than Indiana, the DMS will maintain my permanent file. Upon my transfer to a new area, region, state, district, or province of jurisdiction, the DMS is authorized to transfer copies of the file bearing my name (including credentials). Normally, this transfer will occur after my written request for a transfer.

Print Full Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date Signed: _____

Please return the Release of Information Form to:

Indiana Ministries of the Church of God
Department of Ministry Services
13300 Olio Road, Suite 303
Fishers, IN 46037



BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION AND AUTHORIZATION



Authorization: During the application process at Indiana Ministries, I hereby authorize ChoicePoint WorkPlace Solutions Inc, on behalf of Indiana Ministries to procure a consumer report which I understand may include information regarding my credit worthiness, credit standing, credit capacity, character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living. This report may be compiled with information from credit bureaus, courts record repositories, departments of motor vehicles, past or present employers and educational institutions, governmental occupational licensing or registration entities, business or personal references, and any other source required to verify information that I have voluntarily supplied. I understand that I may request in writing a complete and accurate disclosure of the nature and scope of the background verification; to the extent such investigation includes information bearing on my character, general reputation, personal characteristic or mode of living.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle) (Suffix) (Maiden, if applicable)

Other Names Used: _____

Social Security #: _____ Circle: Male Female

Home Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

County: _____ Home Phone: _____

Birthdate: _____ Birthplace: _____

Drivers License #: _____ Drivers License issued in Indiana? Yes No

If no, what state? _____

List all states previously lived in for the last **10 years**, including dates, full address and county for each:

Dates	Street Address	City	State	Zip	County
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

(Please check here _____ if additional addresses are listed on the back of this sheet.)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Discrimination Statement: "The information on this form is required for identification purposes for background screening processing only, and is in no manner used as qualifications for credentialing. Indiana Ministries and the Credentials Committee do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, age (40 and over), handicap, or national origin."

Confidentiality Statement: "All information gathered in the process of credentialing will be maintained in secured, confidential files and will be made available only to authorized credentials personnel at Indiana Ministries of the Church of God and, in the event of transferring credentials, to the transferring state's Church of God credentials office. This confidentiality may be breached only with the consent of the applicant, or when there appears to be clear and imminent danger to the applicant, others, or society."

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO: Indiana Ministries
ATTN: Credentials
13300 Olio Road, Ste. 303
Fishers, IN 46037

IM /DMS/Application/background authorization
Created: Jan. 2008



BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION AND AUTHORIZATION

Authorization: During the application process at Indiana Ministries, I hereby authorize ChoicePoint WorkPlace Solutions Inc, on behalf of Indiana Ministries to procure a consumer report which I understand may include information regarding my credit worthiness, credit standing, credit capacity, character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living. This report may be compiled with information from credit bureaus, courts record repositories, departments of motor vehicles, past or present employers and educational institutions, governmental occupational licensing or registration entities, business or personal references, and any other source required to verify information that I have voluntarily supplied. I understand that I may request in writing a complete and accurate disclosure of the nature and scope of the background verification; to the extent such investigation includes information bearing on my character, general reputation, personal characteristic or mode of living.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle) (Suffix) (Maiden, if applicable)

Other Names Used: _____

Social Security #: _____ Circle: Male Female

Home Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

County: _____ Home Phone: _____

Birthdate: _____ Birthplace: _____

Drivers License #: _____ Drivers License issued in Indiana? Yes No

If no, what state? _____

List all states previously lived in for the last **10 years**, including dates, full address and county for each:

Dates	Street Address	City	State	Zip	County
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

(Please check here _____ if additional addresses are listed on the back of this sheet.)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Discrimination Statement: “The information on this form is required for identification purposes for background screening processing only, and is in no manner used as qualifications for credentialing. Indiana Ministries and the Credentials Committee do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, age (40 and over), handicap, or national origin.”

Confidentiality Statement: “All information gathered in the process of credentialing will be maintained in secured, confidential files and will be made available only to authorized credentials personnel at Indiana Ministries of the Church of God and, in the event of transferring credentials, to the transferring state’s Church of God credentials office. This confidentiality may be breached only with the consent of the applicant, or when there appears to be clear and imminent danger to the applicant, others, or society.”

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:
Indiana Ministries
ATTN: Credentials
13300 Olio Road, Ste. 303
Fishers, IN 46037

MINISTER ENDORSEMENT FORM

Indiana Ministries Ordination and Licensing Committee

Name of Applicant _____

By my signature I relinquish the right to view this completed form _____

Applicant Signature

Your assessment will be one of several submitted and will assist the Ordination and Licensing Committee Members as they interview and evaluate this applicant.

ENDORSER'S INFORMATION

Name: _____ Date: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Current Position: _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

In what relationship have you known the applicant? _____

Are you personally acquainted with the applicant's ministry? _____

Please indicate your assessment of the applicant in the following areas -

1 is high - 5 is low, U is Unknown

(Use the back of this form for any ratings that need further explanation.)

	1	2	3	4	5	U
Appearance - Neatness, grooming.						
Emotional Stability - Self-Control, objectivity, mental health.						
Attitudes - Wholesome, positive attitudes toward church, people.						
Social Skills - Ability to maintain cordial relations, cooperative, tactful.						
Family Life - Happy and normal home life with family members.						
Knowledge - Wide range; informed on Bible, current events; studious.						
Response Under Pressure - Ability to manage conflict, accept criticism.						
Doctrine - Understands Church of God heritage and teachings.						
Leadership - Respected by others, motivates positively and leads successfully.						
Ethics - High moral standards, Biblical values and Holiness lifestyle.						
Example - Models servant leadership, is teachable and responsible.						
Boundary Issues - Maintains healthy sexual boundaries; is realistic in goals and expectations of self and others.						

Would you recommend this applicant for credentialing in the Church of God?

Strongly recommend ___ Recommend with reservation ___ Do Not recommend ___

RETURN TO:

Indiana Ministries, 13300 Olio Road, Suite 303, Fishers, IN 46037-7630

Phone 317-773-6477 Fax 317-773-6570

THE MEANING OF THE CALL

By Marie Strong

One does not enter the ministry as other professions such as medicine, law, or engineering. One enters the ministry because of a call from God. What is the call of God? God calls everyone to repentance and to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (Romans 1:6; I Cor. 1:26). God also calls some people for special work. Jesus said to his special ministers (Apostles), "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit will abide." (John 15:16)

The call of God has a long history going back to the time of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-5). When God called Abraham to leave home and family for a land God would give him, Abraham went without question, not knowing where he was to go (Heb. 11:8). The dramatic call of Moses at the burning bush should have caused him to respond at once, but Moses gave four excuses for not answering the call (Ex. 3:1 - 4:17). Perhaps Moses' hesitation was because he had tried it on his own forty years before and failed (Ex. 2:11-15). No wonder Moses hesitated. Leading a multitude of people who had been slaves for 400 years could not have been easy; to say nothing of taking those slaves right out from under the nose of the greatest military power of the day. But God answered with miracle after miracle, and Israel walked out of Egypt.

God at times seemed to choose the least promising situations. He chose the woman Deborah in a distinctly male-dominated society (Jud. 5). God chose the child Samuel, so uninitiated that he didn't recognize the voice of God (I Sam. 3:1-4:1a). God chose Amos who was so poor that he had to eke out a living by picking the insects off the fruit trees (Amos 7:10-15). By most human standards Amos was unprepared for the task of bringing the rulers of his day to a knowledge of God. Yet Amos' knowledge of national and international events was phenomenal. Hosea's very unusual call required him to live beneath the level of respectability (Hosea 1:2). Jeremiah complained that he was too young to be called to prophesy (Jer. 1:6) but God said, "I appointed you a prophet to the nations...I put my words in your mouth; this day I give you authority over the nations..." (Jer. 1:4-19). Among the best known prophets only Isaiah comes from the upper social-political class. His call in Chapter Six is more majestic than that of others. In the Old Testament God mainly called the prophets to lead his people back to their original faith.

The New Testament begins with the introduction of Jesus by the prophet John the Baptist (Mark 1:1). Jesus sent his disciples out to preach and to heal the sick (Matt. 10). After Jesus returned to the Father and the Holy Spirit came, God's power, wisdom, and courage were released into the lives of the followers of Jesus. The Book of Acts records the unusual events which followed with great miracles and thousands of converts. Many ministers gave the message of salvation. Both slaves and women figured prominently in the early years of Christianity.

God still calls today. The Holy Spirit still gives courage and wisdom to his leaders. No one can do God's work without God's call and the wisdom and power which accompanies it. The prophets of God not only gave God's message but also spoke to the problems of the time. God's plan has not changed. He still gives his message and speaks to the problems of our time. That is why education is important. Today's prophet must see the social-political-economic problems of our day against the background of God's message and will. There is no work on earth as important and no position as high as giving the message of the King of Kings to His subjects on earth. It is not a position to be taken lightly. Biblical prophets felt the responsibility, the urgency, and the demands of the position as well as a sense of awe about the message itself which Jeremiah felt as a "burning in his heart" (Jer. 20:9) and about which Paul was to say, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). If we have been called of God, we need to "get with it." We have the assurance of the constant presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:20). We could scarcely ask for more.

ORDINATION AND VOCATION

Ordination is the official, public recognition of persons who have been called to and have responded in obedience to ministry as a vocation. The recognition takes place in a service of corporate worship, following the completion of a prescribed process of examination and preparation, conducted by a group of clergy peers duly charged with that responsibility.

Webster's Dictionary defines ordination as: "To appoint to a duty or office; to invest with sacred or priestly functions; to introduce into the Christian Ministry."

While all believers are called to be witnesses of the gospel, some are set apart for a vocational ministry of word, sacrament, order and mission. Oden says, "Ordained ministry is different from the general ministry of the laity in that one is duly called, prepared, examined, ordained and authorized to a representative ministry on behalf of the whole people (laos) of God" (p. 26).

Stafford adds that, "Adequate preparation for the ordained ministry requires charismatic endowment, emotional and spiritual maturity, a divine call and comprehensive studies---all four. It is not a matter of one or two...but all four. Whenever the church lays hands of ordination on a person whose preparation is lacking in any one of these four components, it does so at its own great peril."

It may be argued that in the Church of God, we have emphasized the call as the main (only?) preparation for ordination. There is no intention to minimize that aspect, but in order to provide a more complete perspective, it may be helpful to consider the idea of "vocation."

One's call is unique and intensely subjective; thus it is seldom questioned by others, nor analyzed by the recipient. Besides that, our view often has been, "If God calls, equips and sends, who dares to instruct, direct, or question?" So, persons sensing a call, rode off like the Lone Ranger, to do battle in the Kingdom. "Don't meddle with God's anointed!" A vocation, on the other hand, begins with a call to ministry, but adds the important dimension of the response to that call. To hear a call is one thing, but to respond fully, making the ministry one's life-work, is quite another. Vocation doesn't quibble over part-time or full-time nor is it limited by age, gender, or race. The central question is: Have you discovered something worth living and dying for? Have you found a deep center, a focus?

When one hears a call, and responds (keeps on responding) obediently and joyfully, one

takes up a vocation. And when it is clear that one has a vocation, one is ready to be considered for ordination.

Vocation comes from the Latin, “vocatio,” meaning called or summoned. The doctrine of vocation in the New Testament, articulated primarily in Pauline writings, has its origin in God who issues the call. The human side is to hear, see, respond (as in Paul, Acts 9:1-19) and obey fully (c.f. Acts 13:1-5; I Tim. 4:11-16; Jer. 1:4-10).

In Christian history, vocation has come to mean what one does in response to the Divine call. Thus one’s vocation and employment may be the same, but with the understanding, that vocation is a response to God’s call. The result is a life spent in service to God’s world.

Preparation (what we do) plus enabling (what God does in us) develops wisdom (who we become) in the person who enters ministry and seeks ordination. Jesus called the twelve “to be with him,” and “to be sent,” and “to have authority” (Mark 4:13-15). The “to be with” was primarily for learning, developing and receiving. We sometimes see that as an unnecessary delay. One who has truly entered into vocational ministry will gladly submit to the disciplines of preparation.

Here are some questions to consider, preferably with a discerning mentor to help determine readiness for vocational ministry

1. Is there a continuing impression upon your heart that you are being called by God to be a spiritual leader?
2. Do you earnestly desire to be a servant-guide to God’s people?
3. Is there spiritual maturity in your life that would enable you to be an effective leader?
4. Are your experiences in ministry confirming your calling?
5. Are your efforts producing results? Are others responding positively to your ministerial leadership?
6. Are you growing in knowledge and vision? Do you have a plan for growth?
7. Have you sought a variety of objective assessments of your giftedness for ministry, and were they generally favorable?

8. Do you sense a deep level of compatibility, stimulation, and satisfaction when you associate with other vocational ministers?

(This list of questions is adapted from *Seven Laws of Christian Leadership* by David Hocking, pp 325-331.)

Another issue related to preparation for ordination is that of pastoral identity. (Here “pastoral” is used broadly, not limited to pastor of a congregation.) Pastoral identity has to do with seeing oneself, and being seen by others, as a pastoral person.

One is beginning to acquire a pastoral identity who is deeply aware of a calling, has submitted to the disciplines of preparation and is endorsed by peers and church leaders.

A pastoral identity develops as one gains a clearer understanding of what vocational ministry is, demonstrates a willingness to do it, makes a commitment to the preparation and formation for it, and receives that Holy Spirit gifting which enables it.

A pastoral identity is maintained as one sustains a reasonably effective level of leadership, remains deeply committed to ministry as a vocation, lives a disciplined holy life, and stays connected to the Body of Christ.

The concerns of pastoral identity never cease. Even experienced, ordained ministers are known to ask: “Am I suited for the ministry? Am I still called to be a pastor? Am I effective in the eyes of others? Do others really see me as *pastor*?” While these questions often seem to arise during sleepless nights, they may have positive effects. They may contribute to one’s becoming more personally reflective, to searching for a mentor, and, perhaps, to praying more. To know oneself, to know others, and to know God, is a never ending quest. A pastor is first a pilgrim who leads other pilgrims on a pilgrimage.

Or, as Robert Greenleaf put it, the servant leader is most effective who communicates the truth that the compact between leader and led assumes that the search for wholeness is something they all share.

---Dwight L. Grubbs

Bibliography

Oden, Thomas C. Pastoral Theology: Essentials for Ministry. Harper & Row, 1983.

Cox, Robert G. Do You Mean Me, Lord? The Call to Ordained Ministry. Westminster, 1985.

Suterpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. 4 pp 791-792 vocation."

Campbell, Dennis N. Who Will Go for us? An Invitation to Ordained Ministry. Abingdon, 1994.

Shockey, Richard. "An Examination of the Call to Ordained Ministry." (Unpublished School of Theology paper, 1990).

Stafford, Gilbert. Theology for Disciples. Warner Press, 1996.

David Hocking. Seven Laws of Christian Leadership. Regal Books, 1979.

Greenleaf, Robert. Servant Leadership. Paulist Press, 1977.

The Call

"The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

-Frederick Uechner

The dignity of a vocation is always to be measured by the seriousness of the preparation made for it.