

Ministerial Credentials Guidebook



South Carolina District Council
Assemblies of God
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Adopted by General Presbytery, July 27, 2011 (Online Edition)

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How to Use this Information Booklet Online

This PDF booklet is designed to help you search for more information while online. You may download and print it for your information and records.

Additional information is available at your fingertips by clicking on any highlighted, underlined word or phrase. This will take you to another source of information. Once finished, you may return to the booklet by clicking the back arrow on your browser.

Please read each section of this booklet carefully. If you have questions that are not adequately addressed in this booklet, please contact the office of the District Secretary-Treasurer or the Credentials Secretary by phone at (803) 936-0541, by e-mail at ed.nelson@ag4sc.com, or by mail at the South Carolina District Council, Assemblies of God, 101 Medical Circle, Suite B, West Columbia, SC 29169.

Yours in the Messiah Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ed Nelson
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Purpose

The purpose of a ministry credential is to recognize those who have a genuine call, *i.e.*, those set apart by our heavenly Father to full-time and bi-vocational ministry within the church. Full-time ministry is encouraged, especially to qualify for ordination.

2. Recognition of Ministerial Candidates

Granting ministerial credentials is the end of a long process to recognize and affirm God's calling of a person to preach and teach the gospel of the Messiah Jesus. To receive public affirmation and endorsement by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the applicant is tested by:

- Personal testimony
- Maturity
- Personal, marriage and family readiness
- Biblical knowledge
- Witness of peers
- Witness of the community of faith

The South Carolina District Presbytery serves as the District Council Credentials Committee. The District Council Credentials Committee recommends ministerial recognition to the General Council Credentials Committee who renders a final decision. Only the General Council Credentials Committee grants credentials for the Assemblies of God.

The advice of the apostle Paul is taken to heart—lay hands on no one in haste (1 Timothy 5:22). The process, therefore, takes time to prove the calling beyond one's own testimony and conviction that credentials are appropriate.

Every effort shall be made to discern between those who minister with spiritual gifts, something all should do (*cf.* Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12), and those whom the Messiah Jesus calls to be separated as human gifts of leadership to the overall church body (*cf.* Ephesians 4:11).

Ministry always precedes certification. The witness of peers and the community of faith to one's calling must first be established with a good report of maturity and effectiveness.

When ministry undergoes testing among peers and in the public arena prior to certification, it becomes proven by others. With time, it rises to the level of public affirmation, recognition and witness within the greater church body and its elders that certification is appropriate.

3. Proper Motives

A candidate should test his or her motives when applying for ministerial recognition. Is it for the right motive, biblical purpose and mission?

Ministry should not be sought for the following purposes:

- To satisfy a personal identity need for public recognition to boost one's sense of self-respect and dignity
- To satisfy career expectations of family and friends
- To enhance one's economic opportunity for itineration, solicitation and fund-raising among Assemblies of God churches for a non-Assemblies of God ministry or mission that lacks endorsement by the General Council or District Council
- To provide a career opportunity or path when other career options have certain appeal

Basically, the credential is a like the seal of an underwriter. A minister serving humbly in the anointing of the Holy Spirit will be the best credential possible. Living this way will provide the desired opportunities and occasions for service.

4. Integrity and Reputation

Those applying for credentials should possess a good reputation among those outside as well as inside the church body in relationships, ethics, morality, financial integrity and work ethic (*cf.* Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:7).

5. Unity and Cooperation

The Assemblies of God is a cooperative fellowship based on mutual agreements voluntarily entered into by its members. All members holding credentials shall be amenable to both The South Carolina District and The General Council in matters of doctrine and conduct. They shall agree to be governed by the District and General Council bylaws and policies.

Applicants for credentials should be convinced that God is directing them to become part of the Assemblies of God Fellowship and to be in harmony with its doctrines, principles and practices.

6. Advancement (Upgrade) of Credentials

Credentials may be upgraded from certification to license, or license to ordination upon meeting the qualifications and passing the interviews.

The District Council Credentials Committee recommends upgrades to the General Council Credentials Committee upon the satisfactory completion of all requirements. The Credentials Committee shall determine if the maturity of the applicant and respective ministry is sufficient to warrant an upgrade.

7. Ministers from Other Fellowships

All applicants licensed or ordained by other reputable church bodies who desire affiliation with the Assemblies of God shall demonstrate to the District Council Credentials Committee that they meet the requirements and qualifications required and that their past record is above reproach.

The District Credentials Committee does not accept mail-order ministerial licenses and ordination certificates or credentials from questionable groups. Individuals holding such credentials must qualify for Assemblies of God recognition by meeting the normal qualifications and requirements outlined in this booklet.

CREDENTIAL APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Step 1 – Personal Assessment

Before making preliminary application, the potential applicant should read through the *Ministerial Credentials Information Booklet* to assess whether he or she is ready to enter the process. The applicant may call the District Council's Credentials Secretary for guidance on issues not adequately covered by this booklet. The telephone number is (803) 936-0541.

The Assemblies of God is a diverse movement inclusive of people all over the world from any and every ethnic and cultural group. Regarding mission and doctrine, it is evangelical. Under this umbrella it is also Pentecostal.

In the credentialing process, we seek to uphold our and Pentecostal distinctive and world mission impetus within the greater scope of the Kingdom of God. Due to this, each approved applicant must be in full agreement with the position of the General Council of the Assemblies of God on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and its world mission "to do the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen."

Therefore, each applicant must be able to answer satisfactorily these two questions:

- **Do you believe that everyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit speaks in tongues at the time they are baptized in the Holy Spirit?**
- **Are you committed to helping the Assemblies of God evangelize and make disciples of the nations of the world?**

Before applying for credentials or an upgrade, a potential applicant shall complete:

- The course, *Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance* (not optional)
- All other required courses for the appropriate credential level (Certified, Licensed, Ordained; see page 16 for details)

A transcript of courses taken with grades assessed is required from the educational institution upon submitting the Official Application.

If a potential applicant took similar but not exact courses in an approved school, he or she should provide a transcript to the Executive Secretary-Treasurer for review. He may be able to assign equivalency to one or more courses in lieu of the required course(s).

Step 2 – Preliminary Application

Once the educational course requirements are satisfied, a first time applicant must apprise his or her Assemblies of God pastor of the desire to be credentialed with the South Carolina District Council.

Payment of a non-refundable fee of \$90 is required to process the **Preliminary Application** to pay for all related fees and other costs for a thorough background and credit check. The Official Application requires an additional fee of \$100 if the Preliminary Application is approved for processing.

Please be aware that a criminal background check and a credit check are done for every candidate upon receiving the *Preliminary Application*. Credit issues are best resolved before the pre-application process begins. Outstanding credit issues must be resolved before processing may continue.

If a potential applicant or spouse has a previous marriage ending in divorce, please refer to the General Council's Bylaws for qualifications for credentials before initiating the process through a preliminary application.

After this is done, he or she should do the following:

1. Complete the **Preliminary Application Form** (leave no required blank spaces empty)
2. Call your Sectional Presbyter and schedule an interview
3. Obtain your pastor's signature for the Preliminary Application Form
4. Take your signed pre-application with you to meet with your presbyter
5. Upon completion of the interview, your presbyter will forward your Preliminary Application to the District Council office for review along with your non-refundable *preliminary application fee* of \$90 to cover expenses for criminal background and credit checks and related processing fees (*make check payable to South Carolina District Council of the Assemblies of God, or SCDAG*)
6. Upon approval of the Preliminary Application, the Official Application Packet will be mailed to you from the District Council office.

The **Official Application Packet** includes the following:

1. Information booklet
2. *Official Application Form*
3. *Information Authorization & Release Form(s)*
4. Exam synopsis

Step 3 – Official Application

Upon receiving the **Official Application Packet**, the applicant should fill out the required forms and remit the following:

1. **Official Application** (must be filled out completely and signed)
2. **Remittance of \$100 for Official Application fee** (non-refundable fee - *make check payable to South Carolina District Council of Assemblies of God*).
3. **Letter of intent** (attach a letter of intent to describe/explain in detail your desire for credentials, the nature of your call to ministry, and your plans to devote your time to the ministry of the gospel)
4. **Transcript(s)** (must show successful completion of all required coursework needed to satisfy the education requirements for desired level)
5. **Reference Forms** (all contact information must be current)
6. **Information Authorization & Release Form(s)** (must be completed by applicant (and spouse, if

applicable) and notarized by a notary public)

Mail all of the above-mentioned items to:

*Attn: Credentials Secretary
South Carolina District Council
Assemblies of God
101 Medical Circle, Suite B
West Columbia, SC 29169*

Step 4 - Official Review

Upon receipt of the completed Official Application Packet (*Step 2*), all information will be reviewed by the District Secretary-Treasurer's office and Credentials Secretary.

The completed packet (including all references) must be received in the District Council office on or before **December 31 for Ordination Credential**.

Applicants for Certified Minister and Ministry License may apply at any time during the year.

Step 5 – Formal Interview

Applicants will be required to attend one of the regularly scheduled credential meetings. Please refer to the enclosed insert for current dates.

Formal interviews take place at the scheduled credential meeting (see [District Council calendar](#)).

No applicant will be approved for credentials without a formal interview.

Step 6 – Proctored Written Exam

All applicants must complete a written exam. The General Council requires the exam to be proctored.

Upon completion of the Official Application, references and other information required for the file, the Credentials Secretary will notify applicants of the time and place for their scheduled exams. (*Synopsis for appropriate level exam is included in the Official Application Packet.*)

Step 7 – Approval Process

Once the file is complete, the credential application file shall be presented to the District Credentials Committee at a regularly scheduled meeting. The committee will review the application.

Upon approval of the District Credential Committee, the application file will be presented to the District Presbytery Board approval to recommend to the General Secretariat of the Assemblies of God.

The Office of the General Secretariat will review the application file. This may entail the collection of more information or specific clarifications of information, if requested.

Upon clearance by the Office of the General Secretariat, the applicant's file will be forwarded to the General Secretary for final approval and issuance of the credential.

Applicants will not receive any additional correspondence from the District Secretary-Treasurer's office concerning their credential application until notification is received from the General Secretary's office.

Applicants who have been approved for ordination will be presented for recognition at the District Council in the month of May.

FAST-TRACK CREDENTIALING PROCESS

In August 2011, the General Presbytery approved a fast-track credentialing process using the Official Application for Ministerial Credentials with the same following requirements as applied to those who transfer as members of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship when processing the following candidates:

1. Lead pastors who want to bring their existing congregations into the Assemblies of God
2. Staff pastors of those same congregations who currently hold credentials with other organizations
3. Groupings of existing ethnic ministers who wish to affiliate with The General Council of the Assemblies of God

In all cases, applicants must be persons who are Pentecostal in experience, agree with the Statement of Fundamental Truths, and are willing to embrace "voluntary cooperation" with the Assemblies of God in all of its implications.

- A completed Official Application for Ministerial Credentials
- A letter of recommendation from two other pastors (preferably Assemblies of God or fraternal fellowships)
- The study of a condensed manual on Assemblies of God History, Missions and Governance
- Background checks
- Signed Authorization/Release forms
- Interview with District Council executives of their designees
- Ordained level ministers who are to have the laying on of hands by District Council executives (perhaps at a set-in-order meeting of a congregation coming into the Assemblies of God Fellowship)

THE MINISTRY

The Messiah Jesus gave human gifts to his Church to oversee and conduct its affairs in his Name for his kingdom's sake. These are listed in the Holy Scriptures as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (*cf.* Ephesians 4:11).

In the first century, those fulfilling these five ministry roles were known as the elders of the Church. Such are those ministers today who are called into these ministries. Upon qualification and examination, it is only appropriate to have the elders lay hands upon them for ordination (*i.e.*, consecration to full-time ministry).

Others are recognized in full-time and bi-vocational roles of ministry in support of the five ministry roles listed above. Their ministerial duties include exhortation, administration and helping (*cf.* Romans 12:7, 8).

Our heavenly Father's calling forth these ministries is within his sovereign discretion without regard to sex, race, disability, or national origin.

In terms of maturity of ministry, three classifications of credentials are recognized in the Assemblies of God: Ordination, License, and Certification.

All ministers currently holding ministerial credentials are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

The following qualifications pertain to all applicants for ministerial recognition:

1. Salvation

Give personal testimony of having experienced the new (or second) birth (*cf.* John 3:5).

2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Give personal testimony to having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues at the same time according to Acts 2:4.

3. Evidence of Call

Show clear evidence of a divine call to the ministry evidenced by personal conviction and passion confirmed by the work of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of peers.

4. Christian Character

Live a blameless life and of good report from among those who are outside the Church (*cf.* Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:7).

5. Doctrinal Position

Pass examination of having a thorough understanding of, and agreement with, the doctrinal position of the Assemblies of God as contained in the *Official Statement of Fundamental Truths*.

6. Assemblies of God Polity

Possess a satisfactory working knowledge of the principles, practices, and purposes of the Fellowship through a study of *The General Council Constitution and Bylaws* and *The South Carolina District Council Constitution and Bylaws*.

7. Commitment to the Fellowship

Indicate loyalty to our constitutional agreements, a cooperative spirit, and a readiness to seek and receive the counsel of older fellow ministers and those in positions of authority.

8. Basic Education Requirements

Please refer to pages 15-17 of this booklet.

9. Eligibility of Women

The Scriptures plainly teach that divinely called and qualified women may also serve the Church in the ministry of the Word (*cf.* Joel 2:29; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5).

Women who have developed in the ministry of the Word so that their ministry is generally accepted; who have proven their qualifications in actual service; and who have met all the requirements of the credentials committees of the District Council and General Council, are entitled to whatever grade of credential their qualifications warrant and the right to administer the ordinances of the Church when such acts are necessary.

10. Marital Readiness and Harmony

Single men and women may be approved for ministerial credentials providing they live in celibacy until such time marriage may occur.

Married men and women may be approved for ministerial credentials providing the husband and wife are in complete agreement, commitment and harmony to live out the calling of God in obedience as a family and seek to satisfy the normal home and ministry expectations of each other in full-time or bi-vocational ministry.

10. Marital Status

Be approved as meeting the Assemblies of God position for credentialed ministers regarding marriage (the Assemblies of God disapproves of married persons holding ministerial credentials if either marriage partner has a former spouse living unless the divorce occurred prior to his or her conversion except as provided for in the General Council Constitution and Bylaws).

Annulments, Marriage Dissolutions and Pre-Conversion Divorce

Provision is made in the General Council Bylaws for the following divorce exceptions for individuals applying for credentials:

- Ecclesiastical annulment
- Preconversion divorce
- Infidelity or abandonment of the believer by the unbeliever

The applicant must be either a credentialed minister or one who intends to apply for ministerial credentials, of one who is married or contemplating marriage to a minister, either of whom has a former spouse still living.

The Executive Presbytery of the General Council is authorized by the General Council to determine whether an applicant's annulment of a former marriage is consistent with the scriptural position of the Fellowship relating to the granting or holding of ministerial credentials; or, in the case of a divorce or a dissolution, whether the circumstances would more appropriately be classified as calling for an annulment; or if the divorce occurred prior to conversion.

The application for an annulment must be accompanied by clear and satisfactory evidence of an illegal marriage through deception or fraud.

In those cases involving pre-conversion divorce, they shall be decided on an individual basis just as those that deal with annulments are decided. An application for pre-conversion divorce recognition must be processed through the District Presbytery and the General Council Executive Presbytery prior to receiving a credential application. Appeals from the decisions of the Executive Presbytery may be made to the General Presbytery.

In regard to applicants or their spouses who have had two or more past marriages, at the recommendation of the South Carolina District Presbytery, an exception may be made for those who have been in their current marriage for at least ten years.

11. Ministers from Other Organizations

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

Such applicants shall be required to:

- (1) Conform to Assemblies of God criteria for recognition
- (2) Complete a Preliminary Application and Official Application for ministerial recognition

- (3) Submit a letter of recommendation from a neighboring Assemblies of God minister and/or the Sectional Presbyter for the applicant's geographical area
- (4) Submit a recommendation from the church body with which the minister was formerly affiliated. If such is not available, letters of recommendation shall be sought from three reputable ordained ministers who are familiar with the applicant's ministry, two of whom should be with the applicant's former credentialing body
- (5) Complete such courses as may be prescribed by the General Presbytery for ministers transferring from other credentialing bodies.
- (6) Take the written credential examination
- (7) Meet with the District Credentials Committee for a formal interview
- (8) Be recommended by the District Credentials Committee for approval to the General Council Credentials Committee
- (9) Ministers who receive Assemblies of God recognition shall have relinquished their ministerial credential with any other organization(s)

12. Transfers of Ordination from Assemblies of God World Fellowship Groups

Ordination is the only level of credential that can be transferred from the World Assemblies of God Fellowship Group.

Applicants must complete the official application along with the forms required of all new applicants. They must provide proof of completion of the United States *Assemblies of God History, Missions and Governance* course.

The applicant shall relinquish the ministerial credential with the other organization if the credential is transferred.

13. Residency Requirements

An applicant for ministerial credentials must have been a resident of the State of South Carolina as follows:

- (1) Certified: Six months *before* credential may be granted
- (2) Licensed: Six months *before* credential may be granted
- (3) Ordained: One year *before* credential may be granted

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

General Guidelines

1. There are three (3) ways to satisfy education requirements for credentials with the Assemblies of God:

a. Attend an Assemblies of God college as a Biblical Studies or Ministerial Studies major. Under this option, the requirements are as follows:

Certified – Successfully complete two (2) full years of an Assemblies of God college course work as a *Biblical Studies* or *Ministerial Studies* major with sufficient ministry involvement

Licensed – Successfully complete three (3) full years of Assemblies of God college course work as a *Biblical Studies* or *Ministerial Studies* major with sufficient ministry involvement.

Ordained – Successfully complete four (4) full years, including graduation, of Assemblies of God college course work as a *Biblical studies* or *Ministerial Studies* major with sufficient ministry involvement

b. Successfully complete the Global/Berean University correspondence courses prescribed by the General Presbytery for the level of credential being sought. For the requirements under this option, see the section on “Global University’s Berean School of Ministry Correspondence Course Requirements”.

c. Attend a recognized Bible College other than the Assemblies of God. Under this option, the transcript must reflect successful completion of courses equivalent to current General Presbytery requirements. In addition to sufficient courses on the transcript, the candidate will be required to take the following Global/Berean correspondence courses: *Assemblies of God History, Missions & Governance*.

2. A grade of ‘C’ or better is required on all courses to be applied toward education requirements.
3. An applicant who has attended an Assemblies of God college as a non-Bible or non-ministries major will be considered for credentials on a case-by-case basis. The District Office will evaluate completed Bible and ministry-related courses with current General Presbytery requirements. Credit will be given for similar courses, provided the extensiveness of study is equivalent to Global/Berean courses.

Once evaluation is done, remaining courses must be successfully completed to satisfy the education requirements. If the District Council office is unfamiliar with the institution from which your transcript is received, you will need to supply a catalog with course descriptions from the institution so an accurate evaluation can be made.

South Carolina District School of Ministry

The South Carolina District School of Ministry exists to help applicants and other students study all required courses for credentials through Global University’s Berean School of Ministry. For enrollment

information, please contact the District Council office at (803) 936-0541.

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY'S BEREAN SCHOOL OF MINISTRY CORRESPONDENCE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CERTIFIED MINISTER

BIB 114	Christ in the Synoptic Gospels (BIB112 Synoptic Gospels satisfies this course requirement)
THE 114	Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine
BIB 115	Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers
BIB 117	Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon
BIB 121	Introduction to Hermeneutics: How to Interpret the Bible
MIN 123	The Local Church in Evangelism
THE 142	Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance*
MIN 181	Relationships and Ethics in Ministry
MIN 191	Beginning Ministerial Internship

LICENSED MINISTER

THE 211	Introduction to Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective
BIB 212	New Testament Survey
BIB 214	Old Testament Survey
BIB 215	Romans: Justification by Faith
MIN 223	Introduction to Homiletics
THE 245	Eschatology: A Study of Things to Come
MIN 251	Effective Leadership
MIN 261	Introduction to Assemblies of God Missions
MIN 281	Conflict Management for Church Leaders
MIN 291	Intermediate Ministerial Internship

ORDAINED MINISTER

THE 311	Prayer and Worship
BIB 313	The Corinthian Correspondence
BIB 318	The Pentateuch
BIB 322	The Poetic Books
MIN 325	Preaching in the Contemporary World
MIN 327	Church Administration, Finance, and Law
MIN 381	Pastoral Ministry
MIN 391	Advanced Ministerial Internship

Upon completion of the Ministerial Studies Diploma (including all three levels of study), the student will have met the minimum academic requirements to apply for the ordination process with the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States.

Successful completion of the Ministerial Studies Program should prepare the student for credentialing interviews and tests. The student will have mastered the basic Bible content (Old and New Testaments), theological principles, and practical ministry skills for service in a church leadership position.

For information on Global/Berean University visit its website at www.globaluniversity.edu.

Please note: Regardless of where you receive your education, you must complete the Berean course "*Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance*", or one equivalent to it, before you will be allowed to continue the credential process.

SPECIFIC QUALIFICATIONS PER CREDENTIAL CLASSIFICATION

ORDINATION

Educational Requirements

All required courses should be completed *before* making application (see page 13).

Ministry Requirements

The General Council Credentials Committee requires that all applicants for ordination must have had an active, full-time ministry for two (2) full consecutive years immediately prior to receiving ordination (*teaching Sunday School does not qualify*).

The District Council Credentials Committee is directed to not encourage the ordination of individuals who do not have an active preaching ministry.

Preaching/Teaching Requirements

The applicant must be actively engaged in viable ministry and proclamation of the Gospel that satisfies criteria for full-time ministry.

Experience Requirements

The applicant must:

- 1) Be 23 years of age or older
- 2) Have met all the requirements in making application and in completing the prescribed application forms
- 3) Have held a Ministry License for no less than two (2) full consecutive years immediately prior to receiving ordination
- 4) Have been engaged in active ministry as a pastor, evangelist, or some other recognized and proven full-time preaching/teaching ministry for at least two (2) full consecutive years immediately prior to receiving ordination
- 5) Have been a resident in the South Carolina District for no less than one year immediately prior to ordination being granted

Ordination Transfers

Transfers from one denomination to another are no longer allowed.

Only one exception exists: an individual holding an Ordination Certificate with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada may request a Fellowship transfer. A letter of clearance must accompany the request.

All other applicants must meet the requirements as described in this booklet.

Sister Pentecostal Fellowships / Foreign Assemblies of God

Ministers holding credentials with foreign Assemblies of God fellowships and other sister Pentecostal fellowships must also meet the minimum requirements as listed.

A letter of recommendation and clearance must accompany the request to be credentialed with the General Council of the Assemblies of God. *(See page 6, #7-Ministers from Other Fellowships and page 11, #1-Ministers from Other Organizations.)*

LICENSE

Educational Requirements

The applicant must complete all required courses *before* making application (see page 13).

Ministry Requirements

The applicant must be actively engaged in approved ministry.

Experience Requirements

- 1) The applicant shall have practical experience in preaching (*teaching Sunday School does not qualify*) together with an evident purpose to devote oneself to preaching the Gospel full-time
- 2) The applicant shall have cooperated fully as a Certified Minister with all of the policies of the District.

CERTIFICATE OF MINISTRY

Educational Requirements

All required courses must be completed *before* making application (see page 13).

General Requirements

Applicants shall demonstrate a divine call to the ministry and show promise of usefulness in the Gospel work. They shall devote a part of their time to Christian ministry and, at the discretion of the District Credentials Committee, remain under the supervision of a pastor or a designated supervisor.

Applicants must be actively engaged in viable ministry and proclamation of the Gospel.

Pastoral Requirements

In the event a Certified Minister is serving in a position of the pastor, he or she shall be expected to advance to Ministry License within two (2) years of acceptance of the pastorate.

This shall not apply to any minister who has reached the age of sixty-five (65) or older, or whose certificate has been issued on a provisional basis.

Any exceptions shall be at the discretion of the District Credentials Committee.

Exception for Provisional Issuance

A Certificate of Ministry may be issued on a provisional basis to a person who has not met all the credentialing requirements, but who is deemed by the District Credentials Committee to be essential to the continuity of a church or a ministry outreach for which a duly credentialed and qualified minister is unavailable.

The reason for such a provisional issuance must be ministry-driven.

The justification for its use is terminated when the minister ceases to be involved in the ministry for which it was initially granted unless he accepts another qualifying assignment.

Other limitations are:

- (a) A Certificate of Ministry granted on a provisional basis will be issued for one year and shall not be renewed more than two times.
- (b) A person who has been granted the Certificate of Ministry on a provisional basis must meet the qualifications for a Certificate of Ministry within a three-year period.

ADDITIONAL CREDENTIAL INFORMATION

RENEWAL OF CREDENTIALS

The General Council of the Assemblies of God issues all credentials. Renewal forms are mailed from The General Council in November each year. Renewal forms are to be filled out completely according to the instructions on the renewal form and signed.

Copies 1 and 2 are to be mailed to the District Secretary-Treasurer. The renewal form must be filled out completely. This includes every question and every blank space.

All renewals which are not completed will be returned to the minister and must be received, completed and back in the District Office by or before December 31 to avoid late fees.

Renewal Mailed to District Office

The General Council will not accept a credential renewal without the signature of the District Secretary-Treasurer or District Superintendent.

If a credential renewal is mailed directly to the General Council and does not reach the District Secretary-Treasurer in time to be signed and received by the General Secretary by or before December 31, the renewal will be considered late. Late fees charged by the General Council and District Council will be required.

TRANSFER OF CREDENTIALS

When moving from the South Carolina District to take up residence in another Assemblies of God district, a minister shall request a transfer. A certificate of transfer will be issued unless definite charges have been preferred.

The District Credentials Committee will transfer those who relocate to another district at its discretion. Exceptions may be made for:

- a) ministers moving to serve at General Council Headquarters;
- b) those who are retired from active ministry;
- c) those who are in the Armed Forces currently on active duty,
- d) those who are serving on the faculties of Assemblies of God schools,
- e) those who are appointed home missionaries retaining membership in their home districts, districts,
- f) students in schools outside their and
- g) active chaplains.

A minister coming from another district to pastor in the South Carolina District shall be expected to transfer within thirty (30) days of entering the new pastorate. In order to be transferred into the South Carolina District Council, the minister's tithe must be current with the District Council from which he or she is transferring.

Due to the serious nature of tithing, a minister may not transfer into or out of the South Carolina District Council whose tithe is not current.

REINSTATEMENT OF CREDENTIALS

Anyone desiring to reinstate their credentials must complete the reinstatement application forms provided by the District Office.

If the applicant has been terminated or lapsed for two (2) years or more a background/credit report (fee of \$100) will be required for reinstatement.

If the applicant has been terminated or lapsed for ten (10) years or more, he shall be required to take the examination for the credential being reinstated along with a background/cred report (fee of \$100).

Applicants for reinstatement must contact the Sectional Presbyter within their section of residence.

If the applicant is living in another district, the District Superintendent or Secretary-Treasurer must provide a letter of clearance and good standing for the applicant to be reinstated in another district.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF MINISTERS

A *Financial Responsibilities and Agreement of Understanding Form* must be completed by all first-time, upgrade and reinstatement applicants.

The financial responsibilities of credentialed ministers are as follows:

To the General Council

Ordained - \$20 per month, which equals \$240 per year

Ministry License - \$15 per month, which equals \$180 per year

Certificate of Ministry - \$ 7.50 per month, which equals \$ 90 per year

To the District Council

Ordained – Eighty-five (85) percent of tithe per month from all sources of ministry income, including salary, allowances and offerings from the ministry (evangelists give fifty (50) percent of their tithe from earnings *outside* the District Council, eighty-five (85) percent from *within* the District Council)

Ministry License - Eighty-five (85) percent of tithe per month from all sources of ministry income, including salary, allowances and offerings from the ministry (evangelists give fifty (50) percent of their tithe from earnings *outside* the District Council, eighty-five (85) percent from *within* the District Council)

Certified – if pastoring or full-time, eighty-five (85) percent of tithe per month from all sources of

Ministry income, including salary, allowances and offerings from the ministry. Certified Ministers who are under the supervision of a pastor or a local church, and who are not in full-time ministry, are permitted to give tithes into the local assembly rather than to the District Council, providing that the assembly is of the Assemblies of God.

Secularly Employed – Seventy-five (75) percent of income from all sources

Retired, disabled or Permanently Ill – no obligation is entered to financially support the District Council

If a minister falls out of compliance in this respect, he or she shall be disciplined according to the Bylaws.

1. Any further advancement in credentials shall not be given.
2. A transfer to another district shall not be granted until such obligation is met.
3. Renewal of Ordination Certificate shall not be made without review and approval by the District Credentials Committee.
4. No minister shall be considered eligible for any position in the District Council on any level, whether department head, sectional or executive officer, if the minister does not faithfully conform to the financial requirements of the District Council.
5. The District Executive Presbytery and District Presbytery shall ascertain the cause for a minister's failure to comply with the financial policy of the District Council and take firm steps to enforce the Bylaws.

Funds deposited into retirement accounts by the local assembly and/or District Council (MBA, IRA's), or the payment of hospitalization premiums by the assembly, or the furnishing of an assembly-owned parsonage (where no funds are received) are exempt.

TITHING IS ABOUT HONORING GOD

The way a minister transacts personal financial affairs is a matter of the heart. Jesus taught that where a person's treasure is their lies the heart of a person. A checkbook's ledger tells forthrightly where one's heart is in life. The weight of this matter is so heavy in God's sight that ministers who are wrong about money will be wrong on the whole counsel of God. The whole counsel of God teaches us to honor Him.

Ministers should give their tithes regularly and faithfully out of obedience in order to honor God. It is a biblical command. A motive to reduce, limit, avoid or designate giving tithes out of one's earnings is a character flaw that dishonors God. It is a red flag for other character issues of the heart that relate to faithfulness, trust, obedience, honesty and generosity.

The General Council and District Council emphasize faithfulness and honoring God. As shepherds of the souls of men and women in ministry, attention is given by the District Council to tithing as a way to monitor the spiritual attitude of our ministers.

Since tithing is a matter of honoring God and keeping our word, per policy of the District Presbytery, no transfers in or out of the District Council will be honored where tithes are not current.

Policy on Non-Tithers' Reinstatement and/or Renewal

In the event that a credential holder does not give tithes in honor of God according to both the bylaws and his or her word of agreement to comply with the bylaws upon credentialing, notice of delinquency shall be issued from the Executive Secretary-Treasurer's office. Reasonable effort shall be made to work with the minister to bring him or her into compliance with an agreed plan. The sectional presbyter shall assist the District office in counsel of the minister upon request.

In the event that a credential holder is chronic in not giving tithes according to the Scriptural standard of ten percent (per bylaws, 85 percent of tithe of ministry income or 75 percent tithe of non-ministry income to be given to the District Council), credentials renewal shall be placed on hold and not renewed until the tithes in arrears are paid in full and the evidence is shown in regular monthly payments, both past and current.

In the case where a minister is lapsed, reinstatement shall not occur until the previous tithe record is paid in full or a monitored plan is set in order to satisfy tithes in arrears and current tithe. This plan shall be approved by the Executive Committee and guaranteed by the monitor that monthly payments shall be satisfied.

When a minister's credentials are put on hold due to non-compliance with tithing, a minimum six month period is required before reinstatement may occur subject to review by the District Presbytery. Reinstatement depends upon past tithes and current tithes being paid regularly over the minimum period of six months to give evidence that the minister is honoring God with his or her tithe and is proven faithful in so doing.

Should the minister *pay in full* the amount of tithes in arrears and proves faithful with current tithing practices, renewal and/or reinstatement may occur before the minimum six month period upon District Presbytery review.

IF APPLICANT SEEKS CREDENTIALS TO PASTOR HOME CHURCH

The South Carolina District Presbytery adopted a policy on January 25, 2011, to guide anyone interested in pastoring his or her own home church, or anyone seeking to pastor an open-listed local church where one attends regularly or irregularly during the time the senior pastor position is vacant. If one seeks to apply for credentials during this phase for this purpose, or to transfer from another fellowship or denomination for the same purpose, the policy below applies.

Guidance Paper for Interested or Potential Pastoral Candidates Who Attend an Open-Listed Church

When a credentialed minister of the Assemblies of God attends an affiliated church where the Senior or Lead Pastor's office is vacant, the minister is adjured to follow biblical order in such case, and to abide by the General Council and District Council constitutions, bylaws, policies and guidance.

To protect interested or potential pastoral candidates and safeguard the church, the following guidance is offered by the District Council Presbytery to those who may or desire to become candidates who attend the open-listed church:

1. Notify the District Council office in writing of your desire to be considered as a candidate for pastor of the church.
2. Notify the chairperson of the church board that you desire to be considered as a candidate, and submit your résumé.
3. Completely withdraw yourself and your immediate family from the church for the duration of the candidate process to allow all candidates who submit résumés to be considered with the same advantage.
4. During the candidate process, do not communicate with members or adherents of the church in any way, including telephone, e-mail, social media, etc.
5. If you are contacted by members or adherents of the church, tell the person(s) that you cannot speak about your candidacy or anyone else's for the office of lead pastor. Should any communication otherwise be brought to the attention of members of the District's Executive Committee, you will be disqualified as a candidate for the church.
6. If you are a staff member, as customary, you should resign with notice when the lead pastor resigns. If the church board asks you to remain in place as a staff member, you may do so until the board decides differently during the process, or until a new lead pastor is selected and assumes office. At the time the lead pastor assumes office, by default your resignation remains in place. If you are asked by the lead pastor to remain, you may serve at his discretion and desire.
7. If you are asked to fill some interim position in the church during the vacancy of the lead pastor's office, you will not be considered as a candidate for lead pastor of the church.
8. An exception shall be in General Council churches where a clear succession plan is approved in advance.
9. If anything in the guidance and procedure is unclear to you, or you have a question about it, please call the South Carolina District office and ask to discuss it before taking any liberties apart from this guidance.

SUMMARY

The South Carolina District Council is not the Lord of the harvest. Many other fellowships, denominations and churches exist which equip ministers and offer credentials of some type.

For those who desire to be under the covering of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the path may be longer and more self-testing than for others offering credentials. More effort may be expended. But the seal of approval of the Assemblies of God is worth the time and effort taken to qualify for credentials and upgrade from one level of ministry to another.

If this path is the path for you, then by all means move forward in your desire to be credentialed by the Assemblies of God and prepare yourself for this highway of ministry and mission in the name of our Father and his Son, Messiah Jesus.

OUR PRAYER FOR YOU

Our heavenly Father, Creator and King of the universe, we bless your holy Name.

Your will be done in the lives of our brothers and sisters who seek to live out their lives in holiness and service within your Kingdom. Give them a greater will to serve you to the utmost in the power of your Holy Spirit, to prepare themselves to the best of their ability according to the spiritual gifts you bestow, and to possess a heart of compassion and love for You and others in the manner of your Son, Messiah Jesus.

If they so desire to be credentialed with the Assemblies of God, let this become clear to them so they may pursue it with excellence for your glory.

We know we are only a part of your Kingdom. But in this vineyard of your Kingdom, help us grow together in the Spirit of Messiah to serve together in the power and love of your Spirit to see our darkened world come to the light of revelation of your Son Jesus, making disciples of all nations. We ask this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.