



**Guiding Principles of
Licensing and Ordination
for the Ecumenical Church**

June 2015

Ordination

The term "ordain," as it is ordinarily used in the ecclesiastical sense, never occurs in the New Testament. The Greek word translated "ordain" in the King James Version is better translated "appoint." When Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16,KJV), he used a word meaning to "appoint" or "place" or "set." Paul and Barnabas "appointed" elders in the churches (Acts 14:23). In both the Old Testament and the New Testament leaders were "set apart" in a special way. The "laying on of hands" or the "lifting up of hands" as in invoking a blessing upon someone was a biblical practice. New Testament examples include Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; and 2 Timothy 1:6. In the third chapter of 1 Timothy Paul speaks of the offices of bishop and deacon. He perhaps implies that church leaders were set apart to these offices. The term "bishop" may be translated as the pastor's pastor or chief minister in modern terminology. Some churches with a multiple staff of ministers include the pastor or senior minister, the minister of education, and the minister of music in the same category.

Although the New Testament does not teach that ordination is an essential requirement for equipping leaders for their ministry, the ceremony seems in no way to conflict with New Testament principles. The practice of ordination appears to be practical for the organized work of the churches. Ordination symbolizes God's call to ministry, the candidate's commitment of himself to the ministry in the will of God, and the church's approval of the candidate for the ministry. Based upon New Testament teaching and practice, the following guiding principles and procedures are suggested.

Guiding Principles

1. Ordination may be defined as the act by the church in a ceremony of worship of setting one apart to an office of leadership in the Christian ministry.
2. The responsibility for Licensing and Ordination appointments rests with the Presiding Bishop who is the chief elder in the church. The functioning church is represented by the local Ecumenical congregation, but it is related to God's people as a whole and should not be exclusive.
3. Ordination is an act of commitment in the presence of God's people on the part of the individual who feels God has called him to minister in a full-time ministry related vocation.
4. On the part of the church this ceremony is an act of approval, not an act of bestowal. It is an acknowledgment that God has bestowed certain gifts and has called the individual to service. It symbolizes what God has already done as a work of grace in the life of the person called. Ordination does not impart any rights or qualifications which God has not already bestowed.
5. The church should not be hasty in licensing and ordaining an individual. It should be certain that he has the qualifications to serve in the office whether it be as pastor, as deacon, or as any other leader. The candidate should first prove himself to be qualified in character and in gifts for such ministry.
6. Once an individual has been licensed and ordained, he should live an exemplary Christian life and show himself to be a maturing leader in the service of Christ. He is responsible primarily to Jesus Christ as Lord and secondarily to the Ecumenical church in functioning as

a leader and his behavior should reflect his sense of responsibility. It is the Bishop's responsibility to review and ensure all conduct is proper and meets the standards of the Ecumenical church.

The Ordination of Ministers

Licensing and Ordination to the Christian ministry is interpreted by Ecumenical Church, since the New Testament is not specific at this point. Some churches limit the office of minister to that of pastor or to the preaching ministry. The Ecumenical Church recognizes a plurality of ministers: the pastor or senior minister, the minister of education, the minister of music, the full-time teacher of religion, the full-time evangelist, the prayer group leader and others. Such decisions should be left to the local Ecumenical church and not become a test of fellowship or of doctrinal purity. In the case of the multiple staff ministry, ordination may or may not designate the specific, functional roles of the individuals. Specific roles must be defined in a practical manner as a basis for smooth functioning of the church. Ordination does not bestow any honor or authority on one above another. The New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of believers would preclude this idea in ordination.

The Ecumenical Church expects each candidate for licensure and ordination to follow the model of Jesus and to commit to personally discipling 12 members into leaders of 12 Prayer groups. This is the first cornerstone of licensing and ordination in the Ecumenical church

Suggested Procedure

The Ecumenical Church suggests the following procedures which are based upon New Testament principles, the history of various denominations, and traditional practices in contemporary times. Steps and procedures will vary

somewhat according to the historical patterns and local customs.

1. A candidate for the ministry has to be first licensed and prepared for ordination. When one indicates to the church that he believes God has called him to the ministry, if the church agrees with him, it is appropriate for the church to recommend him to the Bishop for licensing. This gives him the ability to serve until he has proven himself qualified for full ordination. This usually includes students who are in preparation for the ministry, but may sometimes include older men who desire to proceed in the ministry without further training.

2. The candidate himself may approach the pastor of his local Ecumenical church with a request to be licensed and ordained. Or, the church where he is serving may make the request of the Bishop. Or, the pastor of a candidate in training for the ministry may request the Bishop to license and ordain him.

3. Upon request of the church, the Bishop will authorize the appointment of an advisory Council of Licensure and Ordination to examine the candidate as to his fitness for licensing and ordination. A Council usually includes ministers and may also include deacons and/or other church members as desired. There is no biblical basis for limiting the examining council to ordained ministers. Since a minister will likely serve churches other than the one ordaining him, it is appropriate to invite persons from other churches of like faith and order and perhaps certain denominational leaders to participate in the examining council.

4. The Council of Licensure and Ordination can also consider candidates who would like to be recognized by the Ecumenical Church and have been licensed and ordained by other churches. These candidates should

present their credentials to the Bishop of the Ecumenical Church for consideration. A church should never assume that a council will approve a candidate. Otherwise there would be no point to having an examination of the candidate.

5. When the examining council meets, it may proceed as follows: (1) The council will organize itself by electing a moderator or chairman (usually, but not necessarily, the pastor of the ordaining church), a clerk or secretary, and one to lead in the examination of the candidate. These matters may be left to the Bishop. (2) The examination of the candidate should include an evaluation of:

- the candidate's statement of his conversion, his call to preach, and his Christian experience in general;

- his doctrinal views on the Bible as God's revelation
- his views concerning the church;

- his knowledge of the Bible and of denominational history and practice;

- his personal attitudes toward the church, the denomination, and the kingdom of God in general;

- his acquaintance with contemporary thought and affairs;

- the candidate's skills in preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministries;

- his ability to relate to other persons in teamwork and life relationships;

- his evangelistic and missionary commitments;

- his theory and practice of stewardship;

- his attitude toward his community and other denominations; and

- his commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ in his own life.

The examination should be kept on a high level and deal with basic Christian doctrines and attitudes, and should never degenerate into a debate between individuals on the council concerning nonessential or speculative matters. (3) The examination having been concluded, the council will dismiss the candidate and enter a period of discussion regarding their decision. After discussion and prayer they will decide to recommend either (a) Licensing (b) ordination, (c) deferment for a stated period so that the candidate may become better qualified and prepared, or (d) rejection of the application.

6. The secretary of the Council of Licensure and Ordination should deliver without delay a written notice to the Presiding Bishop of the Ecumenical Church concerning the council's decision.

7. If the Presiding Bishop of the Ecumenical Church accepts and approves the Council of Licensure and Ordination recommendation to proceed with the granting of a Ministry License or full ordination of a candidate, then the Bishop will direct the church to set a time for the Licensure/Ordination service and instruct the pastor to prepare the order of service and to invite the council and others, if it is deemed desirable, to participate in the service.

8. If the Presiding Bishop rejects the recommendations he will then provide instructions as to future of the candidates within the Ecumenical Church.

Order of Service

This suggested order of service may be incorporated into a regular Sunday morning or evening worship service of the church, or it may be planned for a special time- whichever seems more appropriate. In any event the

service should be conducted in a genuine spirit of worship.

PROCESSIONAL

CALL TO WORSHIP

HOST MINISTER: Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous!

CONGREGATION: Praise befits the upright.

HOST MINISTER: For the word of the Lord is upright;

CONGREGATION: And all his work is done in faithfulness.

HYMN OF PRAISE

"Oh, For a Thousand Tongues". Azmon

INVOCATION

AN INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

HOST MINISTER: We are assembled in the name of our Lord, at the request of this church, and as representatives of the fellowship of churches that have been invited, that we may set aside and ordain A-- to the office and work of the Christian ministry.

(A further word may be said as to the particular field which the candidate plans to enter: the pastorate, ministry of religious education, ministry of music, professional evangelism, missions, teacher of religion, or other work.)

THE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES

The following are some of the passages which will be found suitable: Gen. 12:1-4,7-8; Ex. 3:1-10; Num. 11:16,17,24-30; 1 Sam. 3:1-10,18 to 4:1; 1 Kings 19:9-16; Psalms 19: 1-4,7-14; 119:97-112; Isa. 6: 1-8; 40: 1-11; 61: 1-3,10-11; J er. 1 :4-10; Ezek. 33: 1-9; Matt. 4: 12-22; 5: 1-16; 9:35 to 10: 14,24-25, 40-42; 28:16-20; Luke 10:1-22; John 10:1-18; 15:1-27; 21:15-22; Acts 13:1-3,46-52; Rom. 10: 1-17; 12; 1 Cor. 12; 13; 2 Cor. 4; 5:11-21; 6:1-10; Eph. 3:7-13; 4:1-16; 6:10-20; Phil. 4:8-13; Col. 1:24-29; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 6:6-16; 2 Tim. 1:1-14; 2:1-15; 4:1-8; James 1 to 2:8,12; 1 Peter 5:1-11; 2 Peter 3:10-18; 1 John 1:1-9; Rev. 1:1-6; 19:1- 16; 22:12-20.

HYMN OF AFFIRMATION (or anthem by the choir)

"The Church's One Foundation"Aurolia

THE SERMON

The Scripture references above will suggest many texts and themes for the ordination sermon.

CHARGE TO CANDIDATE

(A formal charge to the candidate mayor may not be given. It may simply be included as part of the sermon. If a charge is given, it should be formal and brief. The following is offered as a suggestion.)

MINISTER: Do you promise to walk worthily of the vocation to which you are called, seeking always to bring honor to the name of Jesus Christ as your Lord; and do you promise diligently and faithfully to perform the duties of a minister of the gospel with no thought of personal reward or honor, having as your primary motives the winning of persons to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and the building up of the church of Christ through inspiration,

teaching, exhortation, and stewardship, to the glory of God? Do you so promise?

CANDIDATE: I promise by the grace of God to live and minister that I may bring honor and glory to the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. [Or, he may simply say, "I do."]

MINISTER: You will please kneel for the prayer of ordination and the laying on of hands. [Candidate }vill kneel facing the congregation]

ORDINATION PRAYER

The prayer should express thanksgiving to God for his calling and invoke his blessings upon the candidate, upon the congregation present, and upon the entire church of the Lord.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

The candidate will remain kneeling while those who have been designated by the church file by and place their hands upon his head. These may include ordained ministers only, or ministers and deacons, or others representative of the congregation and designated by the church; or, if it seems practical, the entire congregation may file by and lay on hands. It should be remembered that those who lay hands on the candidate are representing the church and are not acting of themselves in any priestly or hierarchical sense.

CHARGE TO CHURCH

(A formal charge to the church may or may not be given. It may be included in the sermon. In case a charge is given, it should be brief and formal, such as the following.)

MINISTER: Do you, the members of the church, acknowledge and approve (*Candidate*) as a minister of the church of Jesus Christ; and will you pray for him in his ministry, and work together with him to accomplish the mission of the church, giving him all due honor and support in his leadership to which the Lord has called him, to the glory and honor of God? If so you will signify your assent by standing [or raising your hands].

PRESENTATION OF BIBLE (or money with which to purchase a Bible of the candidate's own choosing)

HYMN OF COMMITMENT- "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken"; "God of Grace and God of Glory"; "O Jesus, I Have Promised"; "Am I a Soldier of the Cross"; "Make Me a Blessing"; or some other appropriate hymn.

REMARKS

BENEDICTION

RECESSIONAL

Submitted to and approved by the Bishop, Presiding Prelate and General Overseer of the Ecumenical Church (January 15, 1999)