

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Ministerial Candidate Information Packet

(This form edited on 9/23/2015)

The following is the academic and official progression for preparation toward full time ministry in the Western Conference.

You have three main options when it comes to your official status with the Western Conference:

1. You can receive your PROBATIONER'S LICENSE and then fulfill the requirements for ORDINATION as an Itinerant Elder.
2. You can fulfill the requirements for COMMISSIONING into a specific area of ministry.
3. You can receive a LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE which is a position established through the church in which you serve but with some connection to the Conference Board of Ministry.

The following is a checklist of those requirements needed for various official positions of leadership in the Western Conference of the Evangelical Church.

All forms, written doctrinal questions and correspondence must be sent to the Chair of the Board of Ministry.

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(Always keep a copy of all forms for your own records)

The Requirements for a Probationer's License

Ministerial Student Requirements

- Have a sense of **call to ministry**. (P531)
- Read **paragraphs 101-309 of The Discipline of the Evangelical Church**
- Have submitted your **Pastor's Letter of Recommendation** to the Board of Ministry
- Complete "**Ministerial Candidate Application Packet**" concerning background, testimony, education and personal history and turn it into the secretary of the Board of Ministry. (P540)
- If married, their spouse must fill their background information, testimony and personal history found in the "**Ministerial Candidate Application Packet**".
- Meet with the Board of Ministry and **be listed as a Ministerial Student** by the Annual Conference and be assigned an Advisor.

Probationer's License Requirements

Complete the following:

- Sign the Declaration of Purpose (**Form 1**) with Pastor, Lay Leader and the Conference Superintendent signatures and turn it into the Conference Office. (P533)
- Meet with your Pastor and congregation and answer the questions in P545 **AND** have the congregation vote or sign a petition affirming your entrance into the ministry by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of those present. (P543) This fulfills the requirement for the "Recommendation for a candidate for Ministry", (**Form 2**), and turn it into the Conference Office.
- OR** Meet with your Church Council and answer questions in P545 as well as sharing your testimony and call to ministry and have a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the pastoral staff and council present affirming your entrance into the ministry. (P543) This fulfills the requirement for the "Recommendation for a candidate for Ministry", (**Form 2**), and turn it into the Conference Office.
- Completed at least 2 years of college level work** which has been approved by the Conference Board of Ministry.
- Those over 35 years of age** or others recommended by the Board of Ministry can receive a license without the formal college education requirement as long as they fulfill all other requirements. (P538)
- Those who have been **divorced** must be adjudged innocent by the Annual Conference. While we acknowledge that no person is ever totally innocent in a divorce, we further

recommend that they complete a recommended process of restoration if at all possible. (P539)

- Must **not be addicted** to alcohol, tobacco, drug use or other injurious substances or materials. (P539)
- Must have godly **financial integrity** and a good reputation concerning finances. (P539)
- Must **not condone or practice homosexuality**. (P539)
- Be a **member in good standing of the Evangelical Church for at least one year**. (P536 & P541)

Initial Doctrinal Interview with the Board of Ministry

Come prepared to discuss your beliefs concerning the following with the Board of Ministry

1. Your view of the authority of the Bible,
2. Who Jesus is and what He came to do
3. The importance of accepting Christ as Savior and Lord
4. The reality of heaven and hell
5. What your purpose as a Christ Follower should be.
6. What is your dominant motive as a Christian Minister?

7. Have you carefully studied the doctrines of the Evangelical Church, as set forth in The Discipline, and are you in harmony with them? Will you preach and maintain them? (PP563; 927. (10, 11))

- Must be **presented to the Annual Conference to receive a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote** by the Itinerant Elders. (P546)
- If passed, this **license must be renewed each year** by a referral to the Annual Conference from the Board of Ministry and then a majority vote by the Itinerant Elders at the Annual Conference. (P546)
- This **license is good for six years** and then must be renewed by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the Itinerant Elders if the probationer has not moved on to ordination. (P548)

2. Requirements for Ordination

- The probationer must have completed the requirements for Probationer's License. (P555a)
- Must have completed a baccalaureate degree approved by the Conference Board of Ministry. (P555b)
- Must have received a M.Div. degree and had one year of internship (not school related and can be waived) under assignment by the Annual Conference. (P555c-1) **OR**,
- An alternate graduate level study program in pastoral ministry of at least 30 semester hours (45 quarter hours) as approved by the Board of Ministry and a minimum of at least 3 years of internship under assignment by the Annual Conference (not school related) and including studies in conference approved areas. (P555c-2)
- After submitting a written **final doctrinal statement** to the Board of Ministry answering the questions below, the probationer must pass the **Final Doctrinal Examination** with the Board of Ministry. (P946.12)

THE DOCTRINAL EXAMINATION

1. Do you believe in the Holy Trinity? Define your belief. What are your reasons for such belief?
2. Do you believe the Holy Scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God, written, and that they are authoritative, normative and binding? Why?
3. What is your belief concerning depravity, and the need of divine salvation? What evidence do you give in support of your position?
4. What is your belief concerning the person of Jesus Christ? And the divine atonement through Him?
5. What is your belief concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit?
6. What are your beliefs concerning (a) repentance, (b) faith, (c) justification, (d) regeneration and (e) sanctification?
7. What is your belief concerning the immortality of the soul, and man's future state?
8. What is the significance of the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper?
9. What do you believe to be the mission of the Church? How do the following relate to this: (a) evangelism, (b) missions, (c) Christian education and (d) social action?
10. What is your dominant motive as a Christian Minister?
11. Have you carefully studied the doctrines of the Evangelical Church, as set forth in The Discipline, and are you in harmony with them? Will you preach and maintain them? (PP563; 927. (10, 11))

See 946.11 for Transfer of Ordination Instructions

- Must receive a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the Itinerant Elders present at Annual Conference. (555.2d)

3. Requirements for a Commission to Special Ministries

- ❑ **Meet with the Board of Ministry and be listed as a Candidate for Commissioning.** (P520b-2)
- ❑ Be a **member in good standing of their church for at least one year**, including maintaining a good reputation, having godly character and personal fitness for the ministry. (P520 (4))
- ❑ Must **meet the educational requirements set forth by the Board of Ministry**. This would include:
 1. Have a certificate or proof of training in the area to which they will be commissioned if this is applicable.
 2. Fulfill any requirement for **biblical and theological training** deemed necessary by the Board of Ministry. This would generally be seen as the equivalent of one year of bible training from an agreed upon school or training organization. Then their transcripts would be sent to the Board of Ministry.
 3. Fulfill **any requirement specific to the commissioned area** which has been agreed upon by the probationer and the Board of Ministry. (P520b-4 & P520b-12)
- ❑ After submitting their written answers to the doctrinal questions below, they must meet with members of the Conference Board of Ministry and pass the **Final Doctrinal Examination** also found in the Discipline, P946-12 & P520b-4.
(NOTE: Please remember to mail your written answers to the Chair of the Board of Ministry at least three weeks prior to your scheduled Board of Ministry appointment.)

THE DOCTRINAL EXAMINATION

1. Do you believe in the Holy Trinity? Define your belief. What are your reasons for such belief?
2. Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God, written, and that they are authoritative, normative and binding? Why?
3. What is your belief concerning depravity, and the need of divine salvation? What evidence do you give in support of your position?
4. What is your belief concerning the person of Jesus Christ? And the divine atonement through Him?
5. What is your belief concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit?
6. What are your beliefs concerning (a) repentance, (b) faith, (c) justification, (d) regeneration and (e) sanctification?
7. What is your belief concerning the immortality of the soul, and man's future state?
8. What is the significance of the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

9. What do you believe to be the mission of the Church? How do the following relate to this: (a) evangelism, (b) missions, (c) Christian education and (d) social action?
10. What is your dominant motive as a Christian Minister?
11. Have you carefully studied the doctrines of the Evangelical Church, as set forth in The Discipline, and are you in harmony with them? Will you preach and maintain them? (PP 562; 927. (10, 11))

- Must be recommended to the Annual Conference and **receive a ¾ vote at the Annual Conference.** (P520b-12)
- The Commissioning is to be reviewed yearly by the Board of Ministry and is **validated every three years.** (520d)

NOTE: If the candidate leaves their commissioned area of ministry or leaves the Evangelical Church, their Commission to Special Ministries is no longer valid.

4. Requirements for a Local Church License

- Be in harmony with the vision, mission, core values, and doctrinal statement of both their local church and denomination.
- Participate in the local church for at least six months and be a member of the church prior to receiving the license. (*ie: The person could be received into membership and receive their license on the same day.*)
- Have their calling recognized by their pastoral staff and Church Council.
- Have completed, or be in the process of continued or formal Bible education.
- Be an active participant in their local church leadership development program.
- Remain in contact with the Western Conference Board of Ministry.
- Be an active participant of the Annual Conference and events.

BACKGROUND AND CLARIFICATION
of the
LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE

*A PROGRAM OF AUTHORIZATION TO MINISTER
Under the Authority and Administration of
The Western Conference
The Evangelical Church*

WHEREAS the Western Conference of the Evangelical Church desires to Maximize the Harvest, and WHEREAS the greatest need in carrying out such a ministry is for laborers in the harvest, and WHEREAS the cost and inaccessibility of formal training for ministry have made it impractical for many people who could be effective laborers through the ministry of the local church, and WHEREAS people with skills, experience, knowledge, gifts and abilities to ministry effectively in and through the local church and the Annual Conference would find greater freedom and confidence in their work under the provision of official recognition and authorization by means of licensure, and WHEREAS those granted a Conference-approved credential will become an encouragement to other members of Evangelical Church to engage in more active ministry through the Annual Conference authorizing such service.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Western Conference of the Evangelical Church does hereby institute the designation of LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE to persons qualifying for such designation.
2. Those persons having qualified for and becoming the bearers of LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE shall be available to assist the Itinerant Elder and/or Probationer to whom the field of labor is duly assigned by the Conference Superintendent, in carrying out the duties and responsibilities involved in a local church.
3. One bearing a LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE shall be authorized to assist the duly assigned Itinerant Elder or Probationer in the administration of the sacraments of the church, and ministering in those community functions normally appertaining to clergy;
4. One bearing the LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE shall be accountable to the Board of Ministry of the Western Conference of the Evangelical Church, the Western Annual Conference, the Conference Superintendent, the Senior Pastor of the local church, and the Local Church Council, and his/her license shall be subject to an annual renewal upon the basis of a review, report and approval of the Senior Pastor of the local church where the one bearing the LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE holds membership with a review and recommendation by the Conference Board of Ministry and the Conference Superintendent.
5. The LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE shall not be considered a step toward ordination or commissioning in The Evangelical Church, but could be a basis upon which God may call the licensee into further credentials with the Evangelical Church
6. The LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE is non-transferable. If one bearing a LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE takes position at another church, the LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE does not go with them



www.irs.gov -- <http://www.irs.gov/faqs/faq4-10.html>

4.10 Interest/Dividends/Other Types of Income: Ministers' Compensation & Housing Allowance

A minister receives a salary plus a housing allowance. Is the housing allowance income? Where does the minister report it?

A minister's housing allowance, sometimes called a parsonage allowance or a rental allowance, is excludable from gross income for income tax purposes, but not for self-employment tax purposes.

If you are a minister and receive as part of your salary (as a minister) an amount officially designated as a rental allowance, you can exclude from gross income the amount that is used to provide or rent a home. However, the exclusion is limited to the lesser of the fair market rental value (including furnishing, utilities, garage, etc.) of the amount officially designated (in advance of payment) as a rental or housing allowance, or the actual amount used to provide a home, and cannot exceed what is reasonable pay for your services. The payments must be used in the year received.

If housing is furnished to you by your congregation as pay for your services as a minister, the exclusion cannot be more than what is reasonable pay for your services, and is limited to the fair market rental value (including furnishings, utilities, garage, etc.) of the home.

If you own your home and you receive a housing allowance as part of your pay, for your services as a minister, the exclusion cannot be more than the smaller of the following:

- The amount actually used to provide a home,
- The amount officially designated (in advance of payment) as a rental or housing allowance,
- The fair market rental value of the home, including furnishings, utilities, garage, etc., or
- An amount which represents reasonable pay for your services as a minister.

The amount of the allowance that cannot be excluded should be entered with your wages on line 7 of form 1040.

For additional information on housing allowance, refer to [Publication 517](#), *Social Security and Other Information for the Members of the Clergy and Religious Workers*. For information on earnings for clergy and reporting of self-employment tax, refer to [Tax Topic 417](#), *Earnings for clergy*.

Are all ministers treated as self-employed for social security purposes?

Services that a duly ordained, commissioned or licensed minister performs in the exercise of his or her ministry are covered under the Self-Employment Contributions Act (SECA). That means the minister is exempt from Social Security and Medicare withholding, but the minister is responsible for paying self-employment tax on their net earnings from self-employment.

There are some members of religious orders, ministers, and Christian Science practitioners who have requested and been granted exemption from self-employment tax. There are also members of religious orders who have taken a vow of poverty and ministers who are covered solely by the social security laws of another country under a social security agreement between the United States and that other country.

References:

- [Publication 517](#), *Social Security and Other Information for the Members of the Clergy and Religious Workers*
- [Form 4361](#) (PDF), *Application for Exemption from Self-Employment Tax for Use by Ministers, Members of Religious Orders, and Christian Science Practitioners*
- [Tax Topic 417](#), *Earnings for clergy*
- www.irs.gov/publications/p571/ar02.html - IRS Ministerial Regs.

Ministers Defined

Ministers are individuals who are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed by a religious body constituting a church or church denomination. They are given the authority to conduct religious worship, perform sacerdotal functions, and administer ordinances or sacraments according to the prescribed tenets and practices of that church or denomination.

If a church or denomination ordains some ministers and licenses or commissions others, anyone licensed or commissioned must be able to perform substantially all the religious functions of an ordained minister to be treated as a minister for social security purposes.

Ministerial Trade of Business Expenses as an Employee

When you figure your income tax, you must itemize your deductions on Schedule A (Form 1040) to claim allowable deductions for ministerial trade or business expenses incurred while working as an employee. You also may have to file Form 2106, Employee Business Expenses (or Form 2106-EZ, Unreimbursed Employee Business Expenses).

These expenses are claimed as miscellaneous itemized deductions and are subject to the 2%-of-adjusted-gross-income (AGI) limit. See Publication 529 for more information on this limit.

Expenses Allocable to Tax-Free Income

If you receive a rental or parsonage allowance that is exempt from income tax (tax free), you must allocate a portion of the expenses of operating your ministry to that tax-free income. You cannot deduct the portion of your expenses that is allocated to your tax-free rental or parsonage allowance.

Exception. This rule does not apply to your deductions for home mortgage interest or real estate taxes on your home.

Figuring the allocation. Figure the portion of your otherwise deductible expenses that you cannot deduct (because that portion must be allocated to tax-free income) by multiplying the expenses by the following fraction.

$$\frac{\text{Tax free rental or parsonage allowance}}{\text{All income (taxable and tax-free) earned from your ministry}}$$

When figuring the allocation, include the income and expenses related to the ministerial duties you perform both as an employee and as a self-employed person.

TIP

Reduce your otherwise deductible expenses only in figuring your income tax, not on your SE tax.

Example

Rev. Charles Ashford received \$40,000 in ministerial earnings consisting of a \$28,000 salary for ministerial services, \$2,000 for weddings and baptisms, and a \$10,000 tax-free parsonage allowance. He incurred \$4,000 of unreimbursed expenses connected with his ministerial earnings. \$3,500 of the \$4,000 is related to his ministerial salary, and \$500 is related to the weddings and baptisms he performed as a self-employed person.