

ministry may be issued ministerial licenses or commissioned minister licenses after they have completed their period of study and orientation and have entered upon regular employment in any conference/mission/field or institution. Ordained men received thus into denominational work shall be ordained to the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church prior to being issued ministerial credentials.

7. Honorary/Emeritus Ministerial Credentials may be granted, after careful consideration by the union committee concerned, to ordained men from other denominations residing in its territory who have become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and who are retired from active service and therefore do not come under the foregoing provisions. The issuing of such honorary/emergitus credentials does not carry with it any financial obligation. Such ministers shall exercise ministerial functions only in counsel with their local conference/mission/field office or other Seventh-day Adventist ministers in their community, as do other retired ministers holding similar credentials.

### **L 35 Qualifications for Ordination to the Ministry**

**L 35 05 Vital Concern of Church**—The setting apart of men for the sacred work of the ministry should be regarded as one of the most vital concerns of the church. The spiritual growth of God's people, their development in the virtues of Christ, as well as their relationship to one another as members of His body, are all closely bound up with and in many respects dependent upon the spirituality, efficiency, and consecration of those who minister in Christ's stead.

**L 35 10 Scriptural Counsel**—The mind of the Lord concerning the qualifications for the ministry is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Anciently the minister was known as "the man of God" (1 Kings 12:22), sometimes the man of the Spirit. Detailed instructions were given to Moses concerning the qualifications of the priesthood, with the priest's dress, demeanor, and spiritual understanding being emphasized. Then, in order to keep continually before the congregation the high calling of those who served in the tabernacle, the high priest wore on his miter the words "Holiness to the Lord."

In the New Testament the picture is just as clear. The apostle Paul speaks of himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,

separated unto the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1). This matter of separation to the ministry was made very clear to him by the Lord Himself when, appearing to him on the Damascus road, He said, “I have appeared unto thee . . . to make thee a minister . . . ; delivering thee from the people, . . . unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:16-18). He was delivered from the people, separated to the ministry, and then as the anointed representative of God sent back to the people to be God’s mouthpiece and to open their eyes to the glories of the gospel. Later in writing of the work of the minister he spoke of it as a high calling (Phil 3:14).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God” (chap 5:4).

**L 35 15 Spirit of Prophecy Counsel**—“A man can have no greater honor than to be accepted by God as an able minister of the gospel.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p 328.

The proofs of a man’s divine call must be clearly evident before the church sets him apart by ordination.

“Ministers should be examined especially to see if they have an intelligent understanding of the truth for this time, so that they can give a connected discourse upon the prophecies or upon practical subjects. If they cannot clearly present Bible subjects, they need to be hearers and learners still. In order to be teachers of Bible truth, they should earnestly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, and become conversant with them. All these things should be carefully and prayerfully considered before men are sent into the field of labor.”—*Gospel Workers*, p 439.

“A true minister does the work of the Master. He feels the importance of his work, realizing that he sustains to the church and to the world a relation similar to that which Christ sustained. . . . Those who hear him know that he has drawn near to God in fervent, effectual prayer. The Holy Spirit has rested upon him, his soul has felt the vital, heavenly fire, and he is able to compare spiritual things with spiritual. . . . Hearts are broken by his presentation of the love of God, and many are led to inquire, ‘What must I do to be saved?’”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp 328, 329.

“The conversion of sinners and their sanctification through the truth is the strongest proof a minister can have that God has called him to the ministry. The evidence of his apostleship is written upon the hearts of

those converted, and is witnessed to by their renewed lives. . . . A minister is greatly strengthened by these seals of his ministry.”—Ibid, p 328.

For such work a man must indeed be called of God and give clear evidence of his call. Concerning the examination of ministerial candidates the Lord’s counsel to us is clear:

“There has been too little done in examining ministers; and for this very reason churches have had the labors of unconverted, inefficient men, who have lulled the members to sleep, instead of awakening them to greater zeal and earnestness in the cause of God. There are ministers who come to the prayer-meeting, and pray the same old, lifeless prayers over and over; they preach the same dry discourses from week to week and from month to month. . . . The only way in which we can correct this wide-spread evil, is to examine closely every one who would become a teacher of the Word. Those upon whom this responsibility rests, should acquaint themselves with his history since he professed to believe the truth. His Christian experience and his knowledge of the Scriptures, the way in which he holds present truth, should all be understood. No one should be accepted as a laborer in the cause of God, until he makes it manifest that he has a real, living experience in the things of God.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp 437, 438.

**L 35 20 Examination of Candidates**—This counsel lays a definite obligation on the leaders in charge of an ordination service. They should plan for the examination of candidates in such a way as to make this important procedure not simply perfunctory but a true evaluation of the candidate’s fitness. Sufficient time for careful evaluation should be made available, particularly in cases where a number of candidates are to be examined. Wherever possible the candidate should plan to have his wife present for the examination, realizing that ordination affects not only the individual but the entire family.

**L 35 25 Service Before Ordination**—Undue haste has sometimes been apparent in recommending candidates for ordination. On the other hand, there has also been undue delay, extending as long as twenty years and more. Both these attitudes are wrong. Although no employee should be hurried into ordination, it is just as important that when a man is ready to be thus set apart, the service should not be unduly delayed. Embarrassment has been brought to employees at times because of being unable to perform certain important ministerial responsibilities. However, the fact that a licensed minister has spent four, five, or even eight years in

the field is of itself no guarantee that he is ready for ordination. One with less ability for evangelistic preaching or less aptitude for other lines of ministerial and pastoral work than some others will naturally take longer to develop. Indeed, some may never qualify for ordination. Those who do not reveal particular ministerial talent and aptitude for definite public leadership should be encouraged to develop as personal soul winners, recognizing that their call is to some other work less distinctly ministerial.

**L 35 30 Fostering Growth**—Conference/Mission/Field presidents and executive committees should recognize their responsibility to foster the growth of young ministers and see to it that they are given opportunities for development. Any plan that diverts the minister-to-be from his actual training and growth is to be discouraged. Injustices have been perpetrated when licensed ministers possessing manual skills have been asked to spend long periods serving in other capacities to the neglect of their ministerial development. Such a plan may save the conference money, but it delays the development of the minister.

**L 35 35 Licentiate**—When a conference/mission/field gives a young man a ministerial license it should be recognized as a pledge on the part of the conference leadership to foster that employee's growth. And when a man accepts a ministerial license he should regard it as a pledge on his part to render the utmost service of which he is capable. Such a license, however, is not a commitment on the part of a conference that ultimate ordination is assured. It merely provides the opportunity for the licentiate to prove his calling. Although all cannot have the same conditions under which to develop into mature ministers, a man who is called of God will reveal his calling by his whole manner of life and the burden he carries for those who are still in the prison house of sin. In some circumstances it is difficult to provide conditions under which public evangelism as such can be carried out, but he who is called of the Lord will be able to give proof of his calling and of his aptness for the ministry as a lifework.

In some areas of the world field educational facilities are somewhat limited. If that is the case, it will naturally take longer for a minister to develop his readiness for ordination. Therefore, in consideration of all the varied conditions, it is impossible to specify any definite length of time for the professional development and spiritual growth of the licentiate. The fact that a licensed minister is assigned to interdivision service should not of itself delay his ordination beyond the time it would have ordinarily taken place. His service record should be passed along to the new field

and his development receive proper evaluation. In suitable cases a licensed minister who is approaching ordination at the time of his interdivision call may be ordained prior to departure.

**L 35 40 Soul Winning as Proof of Calling**—Ordination of men who have not given clear evidence of their call as soul-saving ministers must be avoided. It will always be true that some men, having been trained for lines of work other than the ministry, in time will give proof of their divine call to this sacred work, and the church, recognizing this proof, will feel called to set them apart by ordination. But such cases are exceptions. Because a man holds a responsible position in the organized work, he is not by this fact alone eligible for ordination.

**L 35 45 Nonministerial Employees**—There are certain lines of work in the denomination that are not regarded as strictly ministerial but which provide experience for some ministerial development. For example, a college/university president or an academy principal with young people under his care bears the responsibility not only of their academic training but also of their spiritual welfare. Therefore, in a sense, he is their pastor, and in association with the Bible teacher is doing actual ministerial work. However, his call to that responsibility is not of itself a basis for ordination. No man's position per se should influence a committee to set him apart to the holy work of the ministry unless and until he gives definite proof of his aptitude and spiritual maturity and has in his own soul the conviction that God has called him to the ministry as a lifework.

Employees in other capacities—such as editors, institutional leaders, conference/mission/field secretary-treasurers/chief financial officers, departmental directors, secretaries and denominationally employed physicians/dentists—may also come to the place in their service where ordination is appropriate; however, the divine call to the ministry must be clear before the church separates them to the gospel ministry. Such employees—as all candidates for ministerial credentials—must have the personal conviction that God has called them to the ministry, give evidence of the ministerial call and gift, and be known widely for their piety and ability as soul winners before their ordination is recommended.

**L 35 50 Not a Reward**—Ordination must never become simply a reward for faithful service or be considered an opportunity to add title and prestige to an employee. Neither is it an honor to be sought by the individual or his family or friends on his behalf. Such attitudes and tactics

seriously minimize the sacredness of the ministry in the eyes of the church.

**L 35 55 Ministry a Calling**—The ministry is not merely a profession; it is a calling. It is not for a period of time until some other more attractive occupation beckons a man, but it is a lifework. Having put his hand to the plow, he is not free to look backward except at the peril of his soul. The apostle Paul, like the prophets of old, felt himself “in bonds” (Col 4:3), and cried out, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor 9:16). A man ordained to the sacred work of the ministry should feel the same responsibility as the apostle of old, and the conference/mission/field that employs him should feel the responsibility to see that he is free to do his God-appointed work.

The simple record of the ordination of the apostles is impressive: “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach” (Mark 3:13, 14). The first office of a man ordained to the ministry is that he should be *with* God. Only then is he qualified to go forth to men to preach the Word of God. A man who is thus consecrated and who enjoys constant communion with his Lord rejoices in the privilege of rendering complete service, refusing to be entangled in business for personal gain and other things of this world in order that, by the grace of God, he may give complete devotion to the cause he loves. Even when he reaches his retirement years he should feel the call of God to the same standard of life as he did in his most active years, “that the ministry be not blamed” (2 Cor 6:3). (See also Total Commitment to God declaration, A 15 15.)

### **L 40 Ordained to World Church**

Workers who are ordained to the gospel ministry are set apart to serve the world Church, primarily as pastors and preachers of the Word, and are subject to the direction of the Church in regard to the type of ministry and their place of service. It should therefore be understood by those accepting ordination and who are engaged in specialized ministries such as administration, teaching, and departmental leadership, that they may be reassigned by the church to pastoral, preaching and evangelistic duties.

## **L 45 Procedure in Authorizing Ordination**

**L 45 05 Authorization**—Ordination to the ministry is the setting apart of the employee to a sacred calling, not for one local field alone but for the world Church and therefore needs to be done with wide counsel. The following plan is the proper procedure, except in special cases where serious delay would result:

1. The administration concerned shall arrange for a preliminary examination of the prospective candidate and his ministry.

2. The matter of ordination is then taken under careful consideration by the local conference committee (see L 45 15) for an employee of the conference or one of its institutions, and by the union committee for an employee of the union or one of its institutions.

3. After favorable consideration the local conference committee will submit the name of the candidate with its findings and convictions to the union for counsel and approval.

4. The division and its institutional boards will submit names recommended for ordination to the division committee. The General Conference and its institutional boards will submit names to the General Conference Executive Committee.

**L 45 10 Ordination Ceremony—Time and Place**—The time and place for the ordination ceremony, including the examination of the candidate, with his wife, shall be arranged by the approving organization in counsel with the union.

**L 45 15 Ordination in Local Missions/Fields**—1. In a local mission/field authorized by its division to issue ministerial credentials, the procedure shall be the same as followed in L 45 05 for local conferences.

2. In local missions/fields not authorized by the division to grant ministerial credentials, ordination to the ministry at the time of its local mission/field sessions or between sessions shall be by vote of the union committee in counsel with the local mission/field committee.

## **L 50 Examination of Candidates for Ordination**

1. Before any ordination is carried out, there shall be careful, unhurried, and prayerful examination of the candidates as to their fitness for the work of the ministry. The results of their labor as licentiates should be reviewed, and the examination should cover the great fundamental facts

of the gospel. Before the church sets a man apart by ordination he should have given satisfactory evidence of:

- a. A call to the ministry as a lifework,
- b. A belief in and knowledge of the Scriptures,
- c. An acquaintance with and full acceptance of the vital truths we believe we are called to proclaim to the world,
- d. An experience in various kinds of ministerial responsibility,
- e. Entire consecration of body, soul, and spirit,
- f. Spiritual stability,
- g. Social maturity,
- h. An aptness as a teacher of truth,
- i. An ability to lead souls from sin into holiness,
- j. Fruitage in souls won to Christ,
- k. A cooperative attitude and confidence in the organization and functioning of the church,
- l. A life of consistent exemplary Christian conduct,
- m. An exemplary family,
- n. Being a model steward in tithe and offerings,
- o. An understanding of and adherence to church principles as set forth in the *Church Manual*.

2. The examination of candidates for ordination is conducted by ordained ministers. Ordained representatives of conferences/missions/fields/institutions/unions/divisions/General Conference, who are present, may be invited to assist in the examination. Where it is deemed advisable by the conference/mission/field executive committee, one or more laypersons may be selected to participate.

### **L 55 Ordination Service**

A special ordination service should be conducted, preferably on a Sabbath afternoon, that will exalt the office of the ministry in the eyes of the people and solemnize the call in the heart of the candidate.

### **L 60 Safeguarding Credentials—The Integrity of the Ministry**

**L 60 05 Union Responsibility**—The union and local conferences/missions/fields share the responsibility for safeguarding the integrity of the ministry and are required by denominational action and practice to



assure that credentials issued within their respective territories shall indeed certify that the holders are in good and unquestioned standing, properly subject to invitation to any other field of service.

**L 60 10 Integrity of the Ministry**—In any case where the integrity or the moral or professional standing of any holder of credentials is called into question, it is the duty of the union to join the local conference/mission/field in conferring, with a purpose to clear away any uncertainty, in order that no reproach or shadow may be left to rest upon all the credentials held by the ministry. Where the matters involved are of such a character that the union and local conference/mission/field committees are unable to resolve the difficulty and announce to all a clear record for the ministry, the matter shall be referred to the division by action of both local and union committees together, or by action of one body separately, inasmuch as any uncertainty in the matter of what ministerial credentials stand for in one field casts a shadow on all credentials and is a matter of general denominational concern.

When appropriate, the disciplinary measures set forth in L 60 20 and L 60 25 shall apply.

**L 60 15 Integrity of Organizational Officers**—In the event the integrity or the moral or professional standing of an executive officer of a division, union, or local conference/mission/field is called into question, the process to be followed to safeguard the integrity of the ministry shall be as set out in the division policies. Should those processes fail and the matters involved be of such a character that the executive committee of the organization served by the officer is unable to resolve the difficulty, the matter shall be referred to the next higher organization. The administration of the higher organization shall call, and its president shall chair, a meeting of the executive committee of the organization served by the officer in question. The officers of the higher organization shall meet with the executive committee of the lower organization in an endeavor to resolve the matter, provided those exercising voting rights shall not exceed ten percent of the membership of the executive committee of the lower organization present.

In the event that the matter remains unresolved, the higher organization shall proceed as follows:

1. In the case of a division, union mission, or local mission/field, the executive committee of the higher organization shall make a determination on the matter.

2. In the case of a local conference or union conference, the higher organization shall call a constituency meeting of the organization served by the officer, and having set before it the facts of the case, call upon the constituency to resolve the matter.

When appropriate, the disciplinary measures set forth in L 60 20 and L 60 25 shall apply.

**L 60 20 Reasons for Discipline of Ministers**—Discipline shall be administered to an ordained/licensed/commissioned minister in the following circumstances:

1. *Moral Fall*—In the case of a moral fall in violation of the seventh commandment, including those violations involving sexual perversions, the minister has, by that transgression, made void his/her calling and, where applicable, ordination to the sacred office of the ministry.

2. *Apostasy*—In the case of apostasy whereby the minister falls away to the world, or identifies with, or gives continuing support to, any activity subversive to the denomination, and/or persistently refuses to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church, he/she has, by such disloyalty, proven unworthy of a place or part in the gospel ministry of this Church.

3. *Dissidence*—Discipline may also be administered in the case of a minister who openly expresses significant dissidence regarding the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Continued and unrepentant dissidence may eventually be seen by the Church to be apostasy and identified as such by the minister's administrative organization after counseling with the next higher organization.

4. *Embezzlement or Theft*—Embezzlement or theft of funds or property to which the minister has no lawful right, or the willful misappropriation of the same.

5. *Other Reasons*—Any other conduct which is inconsistent with the high standards of the Christian ethic, and which casts a shadow over the integrity of the ministry, such as violence or other questionable activity, and which demonstrates that the individual is unworthy as a leader in the Church.

**L 60 25 Steps in Discipline of Ministers**—When discipline must be administered in the case of a minister, four aspects of the minister's relationship to the Church may be affected: his/her credential/license, his ordination, his/her church membership and his/her denominational