

MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALING

IN THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA (EFCA)



I. Rationale for and Benefits of Credentialing

The rationale for and benefits of credentialing include the following:

- A. recognition of God’s calling to and gifting for vocational ministry,
- B. interdependency between the local church, the district, and the national office, to ensure a commitment to and alignment of beliefs, as espoused in the [Statement of Faith](#) (SOF), and ethos,
- C. accountability to the local church and to the denomination, both doctrinally and morally,
- D. development educationally and personally, and
- E. strengthens demonstration of minister status as relates to IRS tax guidelines.

II. Concept and Scope of Vocational Ministry in Scripture

Scripture clearly teaches that each believer has been given one or more grace-gift(s) in order to serve our Lord and His Church (Eph.4:7). In addition, some believers have received the call of God upon their lives for vocational ministry and have been given a grace-gift(s) for the task of preparing God’s people to carry out the works of service which build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11,12). It is those in vocational ministry whom God Himself has chosen and appointed, whom the local church affirms, and who are subsequently recognized by the EFCA by the act of the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3, 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6).

III. Authority

- A. The ultimate authority over the credential is the EFCA Conference, with the Board of Ministerial Standing (BOMS) serving as the implementational authority on its behalf.
- B. The Conference has given BOMS the responsibility of carrying out the policies, which is reflected in the [Bylaws](#).
- C. Those credentialed in the EFCA have been approved by a local EFCA church, a District Board of Ministerial Standing (DBOMS), and the national BOMS. An EFCA credential is a denominational credential and is granted to candidates “in trust.” This means the candidate is accountable to the Conference through the local church and BOMS, and the credential does not belong to the individual who holds it.

IV. Requirements for Ministerial-Credentials

A. General requirements for candidates serving EFCA Church ministries to be credentialed under the EFCA. A candidate must fulfill the following:

1. Must be a member in good standing of a local EFCA church.
2. Must subscribe without mental reservation to the SOF of the EFCA and agree to reaffirm that conviction every three years.
3. Must be engaged in a vocational or bi-vocational ministry that qualifies for a ministerial credential.
4. Must demonstrate a cooperative spirit with the purpose, as stated in the EFCA [Articles of Incorporation](#), and policies of the EFCA, and a lifestyle consistent with biblical standards of Christian conduct.
5. Must be examined and approved by a DBOMS council or committee under the authority of BOMS, who gives final approval.
6. Must complete a prescribed course of study on EFCA history, theology, and polity as directed by BOMS.
7. All assessments of the [Policy on Spiritual and Character Qualifications](#) (PSCQ) must be completed by the candidate, their spouse/friend, and elder board of the local EFCA church.
8. The local EFCA church must conduct a background check.

B. Requirements for individuals not serving EFCA ministries.

1. Those already credentialed in the EFCA who move to a non-EFCA ministry and wish to retain their credentials must fulfill the following four requirements:
 - a. membership in a local EFCA church
 - b. accountability to the District Superintendent (or delegated district staff)
 - c. annual written ministry report to the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing
 - d. annual attendance at a district or national conference (Theology Conference, EFCAOne, Challenge Youth Conference), OR regular attendance at an EFCA pastor cluster.

Should they fail to do so, they will be requested to submit their credential to the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing to be placed in trust.

2. Must affirm the SOF without mental reservation every 3 years by completing the reaffirmation form sent out by the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing.

C. All definitions of language or interpretation of individual cases shall be solely delegated to BOMS.

D. Each credential is the property of the EFCA and is given to the candidate “in trust”.

E. There are exceptions to the candidate’s credential being granted “in trust” and active and/or in good standing.

1. If one is no longer in a qualifying ministry, the credential must be returned to the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing to be placed “in trust for personal reasons”.
 2. If one deviates doctrinally from the SOF, that is “doctrinal error”, the credential must be returned to the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing to be placed “in trust” and depending on the determination of BOMS, could be listed as “in trust for doctrinal error”.
 3. If one experiences a moral failure, that is “moral error”, the credential must be returned to the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing to be placed “in trust for moral error”.
- F. When a person in good standing turns 65 and holds a permanent credential (Certificate of Christian Ministry [CCM], Certificate of Ordination [COO], or Transfer of Ordination [TOO]), the individual will be considered retired. This means the individual will no longer need to be in a qualifying ministry or reaffirm the SOF every three years. This person retains the credential for life unless there is doctrinal error from the SOF or moral error.
- G. Those holding a Ministry License will continue to reaffirm the SOF without mental reservation every three years for as long as they are in a qualifying ministry. Once the individual retires or leaves a qualifying ministry, the renewable (but temporary) license expires.

V. Types of Credentials

There are four types of credentials for ministry issued by the EFCA: 1) **Ministry License**: a. *Expedited* (available only until November 1, 2022), b. *Five Year Non-Renewable*, c. *Three-Year Renewable*, 2) **Certificate of Christian Ministry**, 3) **Certificate of Ordination**, and 4) **Transfer of Ordination**.

A Ministry License, any of the three above, is the required credential for all pursuing further credentialing in the EFCA.

In the credentialing process, there are four key matters ascertained of the candidate: calling, character, biblical/ theological (SOF) competency (according to the requirements for the appropriate credential), and pastoral/ministerial capability.

Credentialing is an important way in which the EFCA comes alongside local church leadership and helps with alignment, doctrinal integrity, moral purity, and accountability of their pastor(s) and ministerial staff.

- A. **Ministry License-Expedited.** This credential is designed for those pastors, ministers, and staff serving in an associate role and have been involved in a vocational EFCA ministry for 10 years or more, and who desire to be aligned with and accountable to the EFCA. The requirement is that the candidate has the appropriate *theological understanding* of the SOF, character worthy of a minister of the gospel, and alignment with the EFCA.

This Ministry License will be issued for three years and, thereafter, is renewable. One is not required to pursue the CCM or the COO but can renew the Ministry License every three years, in conjunction with the Reaffirmation of the SOF form sent out by the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing. The candidate must affirm the EFCA SOF without mental reservation. If the candidate would like to pursue further credentialing, the candidate and the district will determine

which credential will be pursued following this Ministry License. **This credential is only available during the calendar year of 2023.**

- B. **Ministry License Five Year Non-Renewable.** This credential is designed for those pastors, ministers, and vocational ministry staff involved in an EFCA qualifying ministry for less than 10 years, and who desire to be aligned with and accountable to the EFCA. The requirement is that the candidate has the appropriate *theological understanding* of the SOF, character worthy of a minister of the gospel, and alignment with the EFCA.

This Ministry License is non-renewable, with no exceptions, and will be issued for five years and will expire at the end of the 5th year after its issuance. A Ministry License Three Year Renewable, CCM or COO must be obtained within the five years in order for the ministry credential to remain active and in good standing. The candidate and the district will determine which credential will be pursued following this Ministry License.

- C. **Ministry License Renewable.** This credential is designed for pastors, ministers, and vocational ministry staff involved in an EFCA qualifying ministry and who desire to be aligned with and accountable to the EFCA. The requirement is that the candidate has the appropriate *theological understanding* of the SOF, character worthy of a minister of the gospel, and alignment with the EFCA.

This license is intended, first and foremost, for those directly involved in local church ministry of teaching and preaching the Word and, secondly, for those who are indirectly involved in the ministry of teaching and preaching the Word, who engage in a ministry that is supportive of the ministry of the Word. These Word-based and Word-supporting ministries in an EFCA church consist of the ministry of, for example, senior pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors/directors, children's pastors/directors, pastors/directors of music/worship, etc. Individuals may be eligible to pursue a license if they are engaged in ministries outside the local church, though a part of the EFCA, such as seminary professors, chaplains, church planters, and missionaries (church planters or teachers).

This Ministry License will be issued for three years and, thereafter, is renewable. One is not required to pursue the CCM or the COO, but can renew the Ministry License every three years, in conjunction with the Reaffirmation of the SOF form sent out by the Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing. The candidate must reaffirm the EFCA SOF without mental reservation.

The district, in consultation with the candidate, will determine when and which credential will be pursued following this Ministry License, if one chooses to pursue a permanent credential.

This Ministry License is valid as long as the holder remains active in a qualifying ministry. If one is no longer in an EFCA qualifying ministry, then the Ministry License expires. Should this person re-enter the ministry at a later date, BOMS may request re-examination before reissuing the license.

- D. **Certificate of Christian Ministry (CCM).** This credential is designed for qualified individuals serving in local church ministry whose primary ministry is in support of teaching and preaching the Word. It is also fitting for some, both men and women, whose primary ministry is directly related to the ministry of the Word. These Word-based and Word-supporting ministries in an EFCA church consist of the ministry of, for example, senior pastors, associate pastors, youth

pastors/directors, children's pastors/directors, administrative pastors/directors, pastors/directors of music/worship, women's ministry, etc. There are others that are also eligible to pursue a CCM engaged in ministries outside the local church, though a part of the EFCA, such as seminary professors, institutional chaplains, church planters, missionaries (church planters or teachers), etc.

1. Requirements for CCM: This credential may be issued to candidates who
 - a. are involved in vocational EFCA church ministry,
 - b. have been called to and gifted for ministry, which has been recognized and affirmed by the local church,
 - c. have already been granted a Ministry License, and have consulted with district staff regarding next steps for credentialing,
 - d. have attained the level of *theological competency*, whether through formal or non-formal means,
 - e. have been approved by DBOMS, by means of an examination council, and BOMS, and
 - f. have been publicly and corporately recognized in a church service, in which the service consists of laying on of hands and praying over by the leadership of the local church and the District Superintendent or district representative as the credential is presented to the candidate.
2. Preparation for CCM: The candidate for this credential must have a Ministry License and consult with district to determine this credential is the appropriate next step.
3. Tenure of CCM: The CCM is a bestowal of a trust upon those who are called by God to vocational ministry. This trust remains with the person as long as he/she continues in vocational ministry and fulfills the standards of ministry as outlined in the pertinent sections above, and faithfully reaffirms without mental reservation the SOF every three years.

An individual who has a CCM can pursue a COO upon consulting with the district staff to determine if this credential is the appropriate next step and follow the requirements for the COO.

If a person leaves an EFCA ministry or an EFCA church and transitions into a **non-EFCA** ministry, the person may retain the EFCA CCM as long as he/she agrees to fulfill the additional requirements for those serving in a non-EFCA church or ministry (see IV.B.1). However, this person is no longer eligible to be a voting delegate at EFCA conferences.

Should the person leave vocational ministry or cease to be a member in good standing of an EFCA church, the CCM must be placed in trust with the EFCA Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing. Should this person re-enter the ministry at a later date, BOMS may request re-examination before returning the credential.

- E. **Certificate of Ordination (COO)**. This credential is designed for qualified men who serve in pastoral ministry (office/role) in the local church whose primary ministry responsibility is preaching and teaching the Word (function) (e.g., senior pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, children's pastors, pastors of music/worship, etc.). There are others that are also

eligible to pursue a COO engaged in ministries outside the local church, though part of the EFCA, such as seminary professors, military and institutional chaplains, church planters, missionaries (church planters or teachers), etc.

Ordination in the EFCA was defined by the 1990 Conference in the following way: “Ordination in The Evangelical Free Church of America is the act of publicly setting a person [men] apart for Christian ministry [office/role] by prayer and the laying on of hands by others in ministry and the leadership of the local church; thus, recognizing God’s call upon his life; gifts and training for ministry; commitment to teach and preach the sacred Scriptures [function].”

1. Requirements for COO: This credential may be issued to male candidates who
 - a. are involved in vocational EFCA church ministry,
 - b. have been called to and gifted for ministry, “to teach and preach the sacred Scriptures”, which has been recognized and affirmed by the local church,
 - c. have already been granted a Ministry License,
 - d. have attained the level of *theological proficiency*, whether through formal or non-formal means,
 - e. have been approved by DBOMS, by means of an examination council, and BOMS, and
 - f. have been publicly and corporately recognized in a church service, in which the service consists of laying on of hands and praying over by the leadership of the local church and the District Superintendent or district representative as the credential is presented to the candidate.
2. Preparation for COO: The candidate for this credential must have a Ministry License and consult with district to determine if this credential is the appropriate next step.
3. Tenure of Ordination: The COO is the bestowal of a trust upon those who are called by God to vocational ministry. This trust remains with the person as long as he continues in vocational and fulfills the standards of ministry as outlined in the pertinent sections above, and faithfully reaffirms without mental reservation the SOF every three years.

If a person leaves an EFCA ministry or an EFC church and transitions into a **non-EFCA** ministry, the person may retain the EFCA COO as long as he agrees to fulfill the additional requirements for those serving in a non-EFCA church or ministry (see IV.B.1). However, this person is no longer eligible to be a voting delegate at EFCA conferences.

Should the person leave vocational ministry or cease to be a member in good standing of an EFCA church, the COO must be placed in trust with the EFCA Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing. Should this person re-enter the ministry later, BOMS may request re-examination before returning the credential.

- F. **Transfer of Ordination (TOO)**. This credential is designed for qualified men who serve in pastoral ministry (office/role) in the local church whose primary ministry responsibility is preaching and teaching the Word (function) (e.g., senior pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, children’s pastors, pastors of music/worship, etc.), and who have a valid Ordination from another ordaining denomination or local church.

Transferring one's ordination to the EFCA reflects an alignment with and a commitment to the EFCA theology and ethos. It also puts one under the authority of and makes one accountable to the EFCA.

1. Requirements for TOO: A candidate seeking a transfer of ordination to the EFCA shall meet the "Requirements for Ministerial Credentials" (from the first page of this document). This credential may be issued to male candidates who
 - a. are involved in vocational EFCA church ministry,
 - b. have been called to and gifted for ministry, which has been recognized and affirmed by the local church,
 - c. have a valid ordination,
 - d. have attained the level of *theological proficiency*, whether through formal and/or non-formal means, and
 - e. have been approved by DBOMS, by means of an examination council, and BOMS.
2. Preparation for the TOO: The candidate for this credential must have an ordination from another ordaining body or a local church, and be able to provide the written paper, minutes and council decision for his ordination. An EFCA Ministry License is not a prerequisite.
3. Tenure of TOO: The TOO is the bestowal of a trust upon those who are called by God to vocational ministry. This trust remains with the person as long as he continues in vocational ministry and fulfills the standards of ministry as outlined in the pertinent sections above, and faithfully reaffirms without mental reservation the SOF every three years.

If a person leaves an EFCA ministry or an EFC church and transitions into a **non-EFCA** ministry, the person may retain the EFCA TOO as long as he agrees to fulfill the additional requirements for those serving in a non-EFCA church or ministry (see IV.B.1). However, this person is no longer eligible to be a voting delegate at EFCA conferences.

Should the person leave the ministry or cease to be a member in good standing of an EFCA church, the TOO must be placed in trust with the EFCA Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing. Should this person re-enter the ministry at a later date, BOMS may request re-examination before returning the credential.

VI. Process, Policies, Procedures and Accountability

- A. The specific process, policies and procedures pertaining to credentialing in the EFCA will be determined and implemented by BOMS, under the authority of the Conference.
- B. A credentials update will be given to the delegates during regularly scheduled Conferences.

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