

Rules for the Ordered Ministry of The Evangelical Covenant Church

PREAMBLE

The Evangelical Covenant Church recognizes its responsibility to ordain, commission, consecrate, and license persons for various ministries of the church and to exercise support of and discipline over them. The Board of the Ordered Ministry is elected by the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church for the administration of this responsibility.

The Evangelical Covenant Church believes that there is only one mission of the church, the mission of God made known in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the triune God comes to expression through the ministries of the church, including worship, preaching, teaching, rites, sacraments, witness, and service as attested in Holy Scripture. The mission belongs not just to ordained, commissioned, consecrated, and licensed persons, but to the whole church as a priesthood of believers: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). When believers, corporately or individually, are called into the service of the triune God, letting their words and actions bear witness to God's redemptive act, the essential ministry is being performed. The Evangelical Covenant Church has always stressed a vital and informed ministry of the people of God in the world.

While the ministry of the triune God belongs to the whole church, the Evangelical Covenant Church has recognized the specific service to the Word of God by those endowed with the requisite gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, discerned and confirmed by the church to be so equipped. This apostolic ministry is entrusted to those who have been formed and educated rightly to handle the word of truth, to equip the people of God, both corporately and individually, for their respective ministries in the world, and to build up the congregation in faith, hope, and love.

In order to provide preparation for these ordered ministries, the Evangelical Covenant Church maintains North Park Theological Seminary as a school of theological education and formation through residential and extension curricula. The ongoing preservation and interpretation of the apostolic witness within the context of the heritage, life, and mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church is the special responsibility of the seminary as it equips persons for their service and their stewardship of the vows appropriate to the ordered ministry. These ministries are governed by the rules that follow.

ARTICLE I

The Board of the Ordered Ministry

Section 1.1. *Composition.*

- a. The Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) provides that the Board of the Ordered Ministry (Board) shall consist of twelve credentialed persons as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the ECC.

They shall be mature and experienced, elected by the Annual Meeting of the ECC for terms of five years in such manner that the terms of two members shall expire each year. Members shall not be eligible to succeed themselves. The president of the ECC, the executive minister of the ordered ministry, the president of the Covenant Ministerium, the president and dean of North Park Theological Seminary (NPTS), the president of Centro Hispano de Estudios Teologicos del Pacto Evangelico (CHET), and the minister appointed from the Executive Board of the ECC shall be ex-officio members of the Board. The president of the ECC shall appoint one member of the Council of Superintendents to serve as an ex-officio member of the Board. The director of staff ministry shall be an advisor to the Board.

- b. The Board shall elect from among its members a chair and a secretary. The chair and the secretary shall be persons ordained to word and sacrament.
- c. The executive committee shall consist of the chair, the secretary, the executive minister of the ordered ministry, the president of the Covenant Ministerium, and the president and dean of NPTS. The director of staff ministry shall be an advisor to the executive committee.
- d. A quorum of the Board shall consist of eight elected members.

Section 1.2. *Function.*

- a. As provided in the Bylaws of the ECC, the Board has general supervision over all ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, licensed ministers, and consecrated missionaries of the ECC, including their ordination, commissioning, license, consecration, standing, discipline, and the maintenance of high standards in their ministry. The Rules for the Ordered Ministry shall be developed by the Board, approved by the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium, and adopted by the Annual Meeting of the ECC. The Rules for the Ordered Ministry shall govern the Board and its work. The Rules for the Ordered Ministry shall be published by the ECC and made available in the electronic media that the ECC regularly uses for communication with ECC congregations and members of ECC congregations.
- b. The Board shall report directly to the Annual Meeting of the ECC, except that recommendations of the Board concerning acts of ordination, commissioning, licensure, consecration, discipline, and major policies relating to the work of the Board shall be submitted to the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium for prior approval. Recommendations approved by the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium may be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the ECC. Recommendations not approved by the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium shall be referred back to the Board.

ARTICLE II Ordination

Section 2.1. *Description.*

Ordination in the ECC is an act of the church by which a person called by God is formally set apart as a minister of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The

ECC ordains only after determining through careful examination that the person has been called of God, is genuinely committed to the apostolic message, and lives in conformity to it. One may be ordained to word and sacrament or ordained to word and service. The appropriate ordination is determined solely by the form of ministry to which one is called. It is possible to move from ordained to word and service to ordained to word and sacrament in which case the person shall participate in the rite of ordination to word and sacrament and the former ordination shall be taken up into the latter. Additional requirements may need to be met. If a person ordained to word and sacrament is called to a specialized ministry under ordination to word and service, additional education may be required.

ARTICLE III **Ordained to Word and Sacrament**

Section 3.1. *Description.*

The person ordained to word and sacrament has a broad theological education and acts as a theologian for the local congregation as well as the larger church. The ordinand interprets the gospel with authenticity and leads the church to live out its apostolic mission. In ordination to word and sacrament, the ECC gratefully accepts the ordinand as one called by God and given to the church to minister in the spirit of Christ. The ECC sets apart the person ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament with the authority to preach and teach the gospel, administer the sacraments and rites of the church, and exercise pastoral care and leadership.

Section 3.2. *Preparation.*

- a. Candidates shall be graduates with a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent. When their theological education includes work at a school other than NPTS, they shall have acceptably completed at least one year of resident study at NPTS as outlined by the Board or Covenant Orientation (CO). Other seminaries where academic work is taken should be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.
- b. Candidates preparing for ministry primarily in the Hispanic community, and for whom Spanish is the primary language, may receive their training from CHET.
- c. The Board may establish educational programs to meet the particular needs of groups with special circumstances.
- d. All candidates shall spend two years in a mentoring relationship approved by the Board.

Section 3.3. *Qualifications.*

- a. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- b. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- c. The candidate may either be engaged in pastoral ministry or some other form of ministry approved by the Board. The candidate serving in a non-pastoral ministry shall demonstrate its relationship to a local ECC congregation.
- d. The candidate shall have completed the educational requirements as

outlined in Section 3.2.a.

- e. All candidates shall serve at least two years in their respective ministry prior to ordination.
- f. All candidates serving ECC congregations shall participate in the pension program of the ECC.

Section 3.4. *Procedure.*

- a. Candidates shall make application through the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
- b. Candidates in the process of ordination to word and sacrament may proceed with an application for a ministry license through the regional conference where membership is held.
- c. All applications shall include an ordination paper as prescribed by the Board, and a recommendation from the ECC congregation where membership is held.
- d. Candidates shall be examined by the committee on ministerial standing in the regional conference where membership is held and shall have its recommendation.
- e. Candidates shall then appear before the Board for examination to receive its recommendation.
- f. Upon recommendation from the regional committee on ministerial standing, the regional ministerial association, and the Board, candidates shall be presented to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.
- g. The granting of ordination to word and sacrament shall be by decision of the Annual Meeting of the ECC.

Section 3.5. *Rite of Ordination to Word and Sacrament.*

The rite of ordination to word and sacrament shall include profession of vows, prayer, and laying on of hands. It shall be held at the Annual Meeting of the ECC with the president of the ECC officiating, assisted by the Board. In the event the president of the ECC is absent, the executive minister of the ordered ministry shall be the ordaining officer.

ARTICLE IV Ordained to Word and Service

Section 4.1. *Description.*

The person ordained to word and service provides leadership and expertise in an area of specialization, and ministers to the whole congregation or institution of the ECC. Specialized ministry under word and service recognizes those persons who are called by God, professionally educated, and called to serve in one of the following designated areas: administration/leadership, adult ministries, camping, children's ministries, Christian education (all age levels), discipleship ministries, health ministries, music ministries, worship ministries, youth ministries, world Christian studies, or other professional specialization as determined by the Board. The person ordained to word and service participates in the ministry of sacraments and rites of the church in an accountable relationship with a person ordained to word and sacrament. If a person ordained to word

and service is called to the role of a solo or senior pastor, the standing as ordained to word and service is maintained. The Board may require that additional education be taken to enhance ministry skills. If a Master of Divinity degree is completed, the candidate may choose to complete the requirements toward ordained to word and sacrament.

Section 4.2. *Preparation.*

- a. Candidates shall have completed one of the following courses of preparation:
 - i. A Master of Arts degree or its equivalent from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (a program comprised of forty-eight semester hours or its equivalent) with an appropriate area of specialization totaling twelve semester credit hours or its equivalent.
 - ii. A Master of Divinity degree from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools with an appropriate area of specialization.
 - iii. A non-theological master's degree in the area of specialization, and at least one year of full-time graduate theological studies (twenty-four semester hours or its equivalent) taken for credit from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. Courses of preparation shall include survey courses in systematic theology, Old Testament, New Testament, and church history (three semester hours each.)
 - iv. Candidates preparing for ministry primarily in the Hispanic community, and for whom Spanish is the primary language, may receive their training in an area of specialization from CHET.
 - v. The Board may establish educational programs to meet the particular needs of groups with special circumstances.
- b. Candidates shall have acceptably completed at least one year of resident study at NPTS as outlined by the Board or CO.
- c. All candidates shall spend two years in a mentoring relationship approved by the Board.

Section 4.3. *Qualifications.*

- a. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- b. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- c. The candidate may either be engaged in ministry in an area of specialization in a church or some other form of ministry approved by the Board. The candidate serving in a non-pastoral ministry shall demonstrate its relationship to the ECC.
- d. The candidate shall have completed the educational requirements as outlined in Section 4.2.a.
- e. All candidates shall serve at least two years in their respective ministry prior to ordination.
- f. All candidates serving ECC congregations shall participate in the pension program of the ECC.

Section 4.4. *Procedure.*

- a. Candidates shall make application through the Department of the Ordered Ministry.

- b. Candidates in the process of ordination to word and service may proceed with an application for a ministry license through the regional conference where membership is held.
- c. All applications shall include an ordination paper as prescribed by the Board and a recommendation from the ECC congregation where membership is held.
- d. Candidates shall be examined by the committee on ministerial standing in the regional conference where membership is held and shall have its recommendation.
- e. Candidates shall then appear before the Board for examination to receive its recommendation.
- f. Upon recommendation from the regional committee on ministerial standing, the regional ministerial association, and the Board, candidates shall be presented to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.
- g. The granting of ordination to word and service shall be by decision of the Annual Meeting of the ECC.

Section 4.5. *Rite of Ordination to Word and Service.*

The rite of ordination to word and service shall include profession of vows, prayer, and laying on of hands. It shall be held at the Annual Meeting of the ECC with the president of the ECC officiating, assisted by the Board. In the event the president of the ECC is absent, the executive minister of the ordered ministry shall be the ordaining officer.

ARTICLE V Transfers

Section 5.1. *Transfer of Ordination.*

- a. Transfer into the ECC.
 - i. The same general stipulations as outlined in Section 3.3. shall apply. If the candidate is not a member of an ECC congregation, he or she shall proceed to membership in an ECC congregation during the first year of service.
 - ii. The candidate shall submit a copy of the ordination certificate, a transcript of academic credits, a written statement of faith, a character recommendation from the denomination in which ordination standing is held, and other documents requested by the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
 - iii. The candidate shall have acceptably completed at least one year of resident study at NPTS as outlined by the Board or CO in order to become familiar with ECC principles and perspectives.
 - iv. The candidate shall serve in the ECC with a ministry license until the orientation period is complete.
 - v. At the completion of CO or one year resident study at NPTS, the candidate shall write an ordination paper as prescribed by the Board and shall appear before the conference committee on ministerial standing and the Board to finalize the process.
 - vi. Candidates for transfer of ordination who hold ordination standing from a local congregation may be considered by the Board for transfer upon

- completion of all the above requirements for transfer, including the educational requirements in 3.2.a. or 4.2.a., and the submission of a written statement of the ordination process used by the ordaining church body.
- b. Transfer from a national Evangelical Covenant Church outside the United States and Canada.
 - i. Qualifications: Candidates shall have been ordained by their national Evangelical Covenant Church and have standing within that national church.
 - ii. Procedure:
 - (1) Candidates shall have letters of recommendation from the national Evangelical Covenant Church in which standing is held, and the World Mission Committee of the Executive Board of the ECC.
 - (2) Candidates shall make application through the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
 - (3) Candidates shall be interviewed by the committee on ministerial standing in the regional conference where membership is held and by the Board.
 - (4) As a part of their application, candidates shall submit a copy of the certificate of ordination, a transcript of academic credits, and a written statement of faith.
 - (5) Candidates shall complete an orientation program approved by the Board, to become familiar with ECC principles and perspectives in the United States and Canada. Such programs should include participation in continuing education workshops offered by NPTS at the Midwinter Conference, and attendance at denominational and regional conference annual meetings, conferences, and retreats.
 - (6) Candidates shall serve in the ECC while the Board takes action to finalize their transfer at the Annual Meeting of the ECC following the completion of their requirements.
 - c. Transfer to Another Denomination.
 - i. A person ordained in the ECC desiring transfer of ordination to another denomination shall make request through the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
 - ii. The executive minister of the ordered ministry shall upon request send appropriate letters to said denomination and report the same to the Board.
 - iii. Upon receipt of notification of the acceptance in said denomination, the name shall be removed from the roster of ECC ministers and the action reported to the Annual Meeting of the ECC.

ARTICLE VI Commissioning

Section 6.1. *Description.*

Commissioning in the ECC is an act of the church by which a person, called by God to staff ministry, is recognized and set apart for ministry. The church commissions only after determining through careful examination that the candidate has received the level of academic training appropriate to the role of service. Commissioning recognizes those persons who are trained and called to serve in an area of specialization within the local congregation including administration/leadership, adult ministries, camping, children's

ministries, Christian education (all age levels), discipleship ministries, health ministries, music ministries, worship ministries, youth ministries, world Christian studies, or other professional specialization as determined by the Board. The commissioned person functions in a relationship with an ordained person. The commissioned person may participate in the administration of the sacraments and the rites of the church in an accountable relationship with a person ordained to word and sacrament.

Section 6.2. *Preparation.*

- a. Candidates shall have completed a minimum of the following: a bachelor's degree from an accredited college, including at least twelve semester hours in the designated area of specialization plus five years of successful full-time staff ministry, three years of which must be in an ECC congregation or institution. Additional courses required at the graduate level, taken for credit from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, shall include survey courses in systematic theology, Old Testament, New Testament, and church history.
- b. The candidate shall have acceptably completed at least one year of resident study at NPTS as outlined by the Board or CO.
- c. All candidates shall spend two years in a mentoring relationship approved by the Board.

Section 6.3. *Qualifications.*

- a. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- b. The candidate for commissioning shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- c. The candidate for commissioning shall be in full-time staff ministry in an ECC congregation or institution.
- d. The candidate shall have completed the education requirements as outlined in Section 6.2.a.
- e. All candidates shall serve at least two years in their respective ministry prior to commissioning.
- f. All candidates serving ECC congregations shall participate in the pension program of the ECC.

Section 6.4. *Procedure.*

- a. Candidates shall make application through the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
- b. Candidates in the process of commissioning may proceed with an application for a ministry license through the regional conference where membership is held.
- c. All applications shall include a commissioning paper as prescribed by the Board, and a recommendation from the ECC congregation where membership is held.
- d. Candidates shall be examined by the committee on ministerial standing in the regional conference where membership is held and shall have its recommendation.
- e. Candidates shall then appear before the Board for examination to receive its recommendation.

- f. Upon recommendation from the regional committee on ministerial standing, the regional ministerial association, and the Board, candidates shall be presented to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.
- g. The granting of commissioning shall be by decision of the Annual Meeting of the ECC.

Section 6.5. *Rite of Commissioning.*

The rite of commissioning shall be held at the Annual Meeting of the ECC with the president of the ECC officiating. In the event the president of the ECC is absent, the executive minister of the ordered ministry shall be the commissioning officer.

ARTICLE VII Consecrated Missionary

Section 7.1. *Description.*

Consecration for missionary service in the ECC is an act of the church by which a person called by God is recognized and set apart for missionary service. The ECC consecrates only after determining through careful examination that the candidate has been called of God, is genuinely committed to the apostolic message, lives in conformity to it, and is gifted for the specific service to which they are called. In consecration the church gratefully accepts the person as one called by God and given to the church to minister in the spirit of Christ. The ECC consecrates the missionary to be the servant of the gospel by word and deed through the missionary work of the ECC.

Section 7.2. *Preparation.*

- a. Candidates shall have been approved for missionary service by the World Mission Committee of the Executive Board of the ECC.
- b. Candidates who are not graduates of NPTS or CHET shall have completed the required orientation program for missionaries of the ECC. The orientation requirements shall be determined by the World Mission Committee of the Executive Board of the ECC, together with the Board, and approved by the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium and the Annual Meeting of the ECC.
- c. Candidates shall have completed the educational requirements for consecrated missionaries. These educational requirements shall be determined by the World Mission Committee of the Executive Board of the ECC, together with the Board, with the approval of the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium and the Annual Meeting of the ECC.
- d. Candidates who have been ordained to word and sacrament, ordained to word and service, commissioned, or are in the process shall meet the requirements of those categories and may have already fulfilled the requirements outlined in Section 7.2.b. and 7.2.c.

Section 7.3. *Qualifications.*

- a. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- b. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- c. The candidate shall have completed educational requirements outlined in Section 7.2.b. and 7.2.c.
- d. All candidates shall participate in the pension plan of the ECC.

Section 7.4. Procedure.

- a. All applications shall be made through the Department of World Mission, and after approval sent on to the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
- b. The application shall include a paper as prescribed by the Board and the Department of World Mission and a recommendation from the ECC congregation where membership is held.
- c. Candidates shall be examined by a committee on ministerial standing appointed by the Department of World Mission and shall have its recommendation.
- d. The candidate shall then appear before the Board for examination to receive its recommendation.
- e. Upon recommendation from the world mission committee on ministerial standing and the Board, candidates shall be presented to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.
- f. The granting of consecration shall be by decision of the Annual Meeting of the ECC.

Section 7.5. Rite of Consecration.

The rite of consecration shall be held at the Annual Meeting of the ECC with the president of the ECC officiating. In the event the president of the ECC is absent, the executive minister of the ordered ministry shall be the consecrating officer.

ARTICLE VIII
Removal from the Roster

Section 8.1. Description.

- a. A person ordained, commissioned, or consecrated in the ECC may request that his or her name be dropped from the roster of ECC ministers. This request must be in writing to the Board and be reported to the Annual Meeting of the ECC.
- b. A person ordained, commissioned, or consecrated in the ECC who upon request had his or her name removed and now desires reinstatement on the roster of ECC ministers, shall make this request in writing and be interviewed by the Board. Upon recommendation from the Board the request shall be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.

ARTICLE IX
Licensure

Section 9.1. Ministerial License.

a. Description.

The ECC confers ministerial license upon persons who are called to serve in various pastoral ministries in ECC congregations, ECC institutions, and other approved places of ministry. The ECC recognizes that all who confess Christ as Lord are called into the service of the gospel. Ministerial license, however, is reserved for those who by demonstration of character and gifts and by virtue of place of service require credentials of ordered ministry in order to perform pastoral ministry within the ECC and various ministries. The candidate serving in a non-ECC ministry shall demonstrate its relationship to a local ECC congregation.

b. Qualifications.

To qualify for a license, a candidate must demonstrate to the Board significant involvement in a majority of the following areas: administering the sacraments; conducting worship services; providing spiritual leadership; participating in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church; providing pastoral care; managing in a local congregation or institution of the ECC. The candidate must also meet requirements as stated for each license. Credentialing in the ECC does not automatically qualify a person for the housing allowance provided by the current laws of the Internal Revenue Service.

Section 9.2. Ministry License.

a. Description.

The ministry license is intended for persons serving at least twenty hours a week in ECC congregations, ECC institutions, or other approved ministries and organizations. The license is for those involved in pastoral ministry who also fulfill sacramental and other pastoral functions. The license shall be renewed annually. Candidates for ordained to word and sacrament, ordained to word and service, and commissioning apply for this license while in process. It is the appropriate license for all individuals serving as solo pastors who do not qualify for ordained to word and sacrament. The license is valid only for the ministry for which the candidate was originally licensed. The holder of a ministry license is accountable to a minister ordained to word and sacrament within the local area of service, or to the regional conference superintendent. At the time of a call to another ECC congregation or ministry in a different conference, the holder of a ministry license must have an interview with the appropriate regional conference committee on ministerial standing.

b. Qualifications.

- i. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- ii. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- iii. The candidate shall within eight years of the initial receipt of this license demonstrate completion of four core theological courses. These courses shall be survey courses in systematic theology, Old Testament, New Testament, and church history (three semester hours each.) If the candidate

has not already completed the courses at an ATS-accredited seminary or CHET at the time of application for the Ministry License, he or she is required to complete them at North Park Theological Seminary or CHET unless the candidate is enrolled in a degree program at another seminary that is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. Progress on this program of study must be reported annually to the Department of the Ordered Ministry to maintain standing.

- iv. The candidate must be enrolled in CO.
- v. The candidate must participate in the pension program of the ECC.
- c. Procedure.
 - i. All applications shall be made through the regional conference office and processed by the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
 - ii. The candidate shall submit a recommendation from the ECC congregation where membership is held.
 - iii. The candidate shall complete a statement of faith paper and be interviewed by the committee on ministerial standing in the regional conference where membership is held. The Board may also request an interview for the initial license. An interview by the regional committee on ministerial standing may also be required at the renewal of license.
 - iv. Upon recommendation from the regional committee on ministerial standing and the Board, the application shall be submitted to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.

Section 9.3. *World Mission License.*

- a. Description.

The world mission license is for persons who are called to be project missionaries by the ECC. It is intended to provide credentials for those who do not qualify for ordination to word and sacrament, ordination to word and service, or commissioning but are serving as ECC missionaries. This license is valid for the duration of the missionary's call and authorizes the holder to perform appropriate functions, subject to government regulations.
- b. Qualifications.
 - i. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
 - ii. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character, who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
 - iii. The candidate shall be called and consecrated as a project missionary.
 - iv. The candidate shall participate in the ECC world mission orientation program recommended by the World Mission Committee of the Executive Board of the ECC and approved by the Board.
- c. Procedure.
 - i. All applications shall be made through the Department of World Mission and processed by the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
 - ii. The candidate shall submit recommendations from one or more of the following, as determined by the Board: the ECC congregation where membership is held; NPTS or CHET; the regional conference ministerial

association where membership is held; or the World Mission Committee of the Executive Board of the ECC.

- iii. The candidate shall complete a statement of faith paper and be interviewed by a committee on ministerial standing appointed by the Department of World Mission. The Board may also request an interview before beginning missionary service.
- iv. Upon recommendation by the Board, the application shall be submitted to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.

Section 9.4. Ministerial License for Theological Students.

a. Description.

This license is for theological students serving ECC congregations or institutions in fulfillment of the requirements of their educational program. It is valid for one year and authorizes the holder to perform all ministerial functions subject to state regulations.

b. Qualifications.

- i. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- ii. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- iii. The candidate shall be a degree-seeking student enrolled in a qualified theological school.
- iv. The work for which the candidate receives the license must be a part of the seminary requirement, normally internship or field education. The license is only valid for the time the student is engaged in such internship or field education.

c. Procedure.

i. For NPTS and CHET students:

- (1) Candidates apply directly to the school they are attending. The license is signed by the president and dean of NPTS or the president of CHET and forwarded to the Department of the Ordered Ministry to process. The candidate will then be recommended to the Board for final approval.
- (2) Candidates will be in a relationship with a supervisor from NPTS or CHET while license is held.

ii. For students not attending NPTS or CHET:

- (1) Applications shall be made through the regional conference office in which the candidate is serving.
- (2) The candidate shall complete a statement of faith paper and be interviewed by the regional conference committee on ministerial standing when making request for the initial license. Following a favorable interview with the regional committee on ministerial standing, a recommendation is sent to the Department of the Ordered Ministry. The candidate will then be recommended to the Board for final approval.
- (3) Candidates will be in a relationship with a supervisor from the seminary in which the person is enrolled while license is held.

Section 9.5. Bi-vocational Ministry license.

a. Definition.

The bi-vocational ministry license shall provide credentials for those persons who are involved in the pastoral ministry of the ECC while normally engaged in secular work as the major source of livelihood. It may also be appropriate for persons serving an ECC congregation or institution voluntarily or part-time. This license shall be valid for one year and authorizes the holder to preach the gospel and exercise pastoral leadership. A bi-vocational minister may administer the sacraments and perform other pastoral acts when circumstances require, with the approval of the minister ordained to word and sacrament within the congregation, or the superintendent of the regional conference. It should be understood, furthermore, that this license does not meet the requirements imposed by certain states to perform marriages. Income earned while serving in the ministerial role is eligible for clergy tax benefits. The Vocational Excellence class in CO is required.

b. Qualifications.

- i. The candidate shall be a member of an ECC congregation.
- ii. The candidate shall be a person of demonstrated Christian experience and character who has given evidence of loyalty to and cooperation with the ECC and its principles.
- iii. The candidate shall agree to a program of continuing education and training under the supervision of the Board and shall annually, with the application, report such progress to qualify for renewal.
- iv. The candidate shall submit regular reports of ministerial activity to the regional conference superintendent and the executive minister of the ordered ministry.

c. Procedure.

- i. All applications shall be made through the regional conference office and processed by the Department of the Ordered Ministry.
- ii. The candidate shall submit a recommendation from the ECC congregation where membership is held.
- iii. The candidate shall complete a statement of faith paper and be interviewed by the committee on ministerial standing in the regional conference where membership is held when making request for the initial license. An interview may also be required for renewal of license.
- iv. Upon recommendation from the regional committee on ministerial standing, the regional ministerial association, and the Board, the application shall be submitted to the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence, and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.

Section 9.6. *Interim License.*

Interim licenses may be given to persons serving in the ECC in any of the above categories. This license is limited to situations where it is not possible for the normal procedure of application and approval of license to take place. This license is valid for no longer than one year and normally expires on the last day of the month in which an Annual Meeting of the ECC occurs. The same qualifications for each category of license apply, as set forth above, and the holders of an interim license have the same rights and privileges. The application for interim ministry license and bi-vocational ministry license shall be signed by the regional conference superintendent and the executive minister of the

ordered ministry. These candidates are interviewed by the regional conference committee on ministerial standing prior to receiving a license. The application for interim theological student license shall be signed by the president and dean of NPTS or the president of CHET, depending on which school the candidate is attending. Students not attending NPTS or CHET must have their application signed by the regional conference superintendent before it is forwarded to the Department of the Ordered Ministry. Students not attending NPTS or CHET must also be interviewed by the regional conference committee on ministerial standing. Interim licenses are granted by the executive minister of the ordered ministry.

ARTICLE X Discipline and Care

Section 10.1. Goal.

The goal of discipline is to promote the health and wholeness of those who serve in the ordered ministry, and the strengthening of the body of Christ. Care is extended to those in the midst of a difficult period of life.

Section 10.2. Definition.

- a. A minister or consecrated missionary may be charged with indiscretion, immorality, doctrinal error, unethical behavior, or disloyalty to the ECC.
A minister or consecrated missionary may be disciplined by the Board in one of three ways:
 - i. Requiring counseling, training, or other action designed to address the specific areas that are causing difficulty, while continuing to function as a minister,
 - ii. Temporary suspension of ministerial or missionary credentials and removal from ministerial functions, while charges are being investigated and while appropriate care is provided; or
 - iii. Recommendation for dismissal from the ministry of the ECC.
- b. A minister or consecrated missionary may be brought under the care of the Board in one of two ways:
 - i. Requiring counseling, training, or other action designed to address the specific areas that are in need of care, while continuing to function as a minister; or
 - ii. Temporary suspension of ministerial or missionary credentials and removal from ministerial functions, while the vocation of healing and restoration is being pursued.

Section 10.3. Procedure.

- a. The inquiry into the charges as stated in Section 10.2.a. shall be initiated by the executive minister of the ordered ministry and the president of the ECC in consultation with the conference superintendent, the regional director, or the executive minister of world mission. These leaders shall then confer and determine the order of responsibility in pursuing the matter. They may refer the issue to the regional committee on ministerial standing or to the Board. Upon referral of charges to the Board, it shall assume responsibility to ascertain the validity of such charges and take appropriate action.
- b. In the case of serious offense, a minister or missionary's credentials may be temporarily suspended by the executive minister of the ordered ministry and the

- president of the ECC, in consultation with the regional conference superintendent, the regional director, or the executive minister of world mission. After investigation, the Board shall determine the kind of discipline required.
- c. In all matters involving disciplinary action, care shall be exercised to keep information confidential. Further, the accused minister or missionary, with a ministerial colleague as advocate when desired, shall be given opportunity to meet with the Board to present the matter or to appeal the case.
 - d. When a minister or missionary is placed under discipline as described in Section 10.2.a.i. and 10.2.a.ii., it is not necessary that such action be reported to the Annual Meeting of the ECC.
 - e. If, after investigation, it is warranted by the gravity of the offense, the Board shall with the approval of the Covenant Ministerium recommend to the Annual Meeting of the ECC that a minister or consecrated missionary be dismissed from the ministry of the ECC. An ordained minister, commissioned minister, licensed minister, or a consecrated missionary who has been so dismissed shall surrender the certificate of ordination or license, and be removed from the roster of ECC ministers. The Annual Meeting action to dismiss invalidates any continuing standing as Covenant clergy.
 - f. The Board will seek appropriate ways to care for a minister or missionary who has been dismissed. The possibility of restoration and the reinstatement of credentials may be considered by the Board at any time.
 - g. A person ordained, commissioned, licensed or consecrated in the ECC who upon request had his or her name removed and now desires reinstatement on the roster of ECC ministers, shall make this request in writing and be interviewed by the Board. Upon recommendation from the Board the request shall be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Covenant Ministerium for its concurrence and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for final approval.

ARTICLE XI

Standing

Section 11.1. *Description.*

Standing in the Ministerium is the ECC's recognition of persons who have been granted credentials as an ordained minister, commissioned minister, licensed minister, or as a consecrated missionary. In order to maintain standing, a minister or missionary must be a member of an ECC congregation and a full member of the Covenant Ministerium. Appropriate continuing education is required for all credentialed ministers and missionaries to maintain standing. Requirements shall be determined by the Covenant Ministerium in consultation with the Board, and monitored by the Department of the Ordered Ministry for report to the Board.

Section 11.2. *Categories of Membership.*

- a. Membership in the regional conference ministerial association and the Covenant Ministerium shall be of two kinds:
 - i. Full membership, in which all privileges shall be accorded:
 - (1) ministers who hold ordination to word and sacrament, ordination to word and service, or commissioned standing in the ECC;
 - (2) consecrated missionaries;

- (3) ministers who hold a ministry license, a bi-vocational ministry license, or a world mission license;
 - (4) ministers who have retired from active status.
- ii. Associate membership, in which neither voting privileges nor the holding of office shall be accorded:
 - (1) licensed theological students;
 - (2) ordained to word and sacrament, ordained to word and service, and commissioned ministers in the inactive category;
 - (3) consecrated missionaries in the inactive category;
 - (4) ministers serving ECC congregations but who do not hold ECC credentials.
- b. A regional conference ministerial association is a part of the Covenant Ministerium. Its Constitution and Bylaws shall conform with those adopted by the ECC. All officers must be members of the regional conference ministerial association. Only ordained ministers shall serve as chair and vice-chair of the regional conference ministerial association.
- c. Military chaplains and consecrated missionaries shall maintain their standing through the office of the executive minister of the ordered ministry, although they are encouraged to maintain connection to a regional ministerial association whenever possible.
- d. In certain instances a member of the Covenant Ministerium may choose to seek dual standing with another denomination. The feasibility of such a request will be evaluated on a case by case basis. The final decision will be made by the Board.

Section 11.3. Rosters.

A complete roster of ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, licensed ministers, and consecrated missionaries shall be maintained and made available to the members of the Covenant Ministerium.

Section 11.4. Limitations.

- a. A minister who enters the service of a congregation or institution not affiliated with the ECC shall not retain standing in the ECC for more than one year except by permission of the Board. Standing shall be restored upon recommendation from a regional conference ministerial association and the Board.
- b. An ordained or commissioned minister who has served less than twenty-five years and has withdrawn from the ministry shall not retain standing for more than one year. A leave may be granted for the purposes of education, convalescence, or a necessary reorientation period because of personal or vocational matters. The Department of the Ordered Ministry receives and approves such requests and informs the Board. Ministers on leave (should not exceed five years) may perform ministerial functions, such as administering the sacraments and rites of the church, exercising pastoral care and leadership, or performing ministries surrounding marriage and death, with the permission of the regional conference superintendent or the executive minister of the ordered ministry. An interview with the conference committee on ministerial standing is required to process the completion of leave of absence and re-entering ministry. After one year, or the granted period of leave, the minister shall be in the

inactive category. Ordained and commissioned ministers in the inactive category do not have full standing and may not perform ministerial functions, such as administering the sacraments and rites of the church, exercising pastoral care and leadership, or performing ministries surrounding marriage and death, unless granted permission by the regional conference superintendent or the executive minister of the ordered ministry. A minister may apply for the reinstatement of standing. This request shall be adjudicated through an interview with the conference committee on ministerial standing with approval by the conference superintendent and recommended to the Board.

- c. Any person who has been ordained, commissioned, or consecrated as a missionary for twenty-five years or more who is not in a called position, may retain standing but report annually to the superintendent regarding ministerial role and function.

ARTICLE XII **Exceptions**

Section 12.1. The Board may recommend to the Annual Meeting of the ECC actions that are exceptions to these rules. Such exceptions and the rationale for each shall be clearly stated in presenting the recommendation to the Covenant Ministerium and the Annual Meeting of the ECC.

ARTICLE XIII **Amendments**

Section 13.1. Amendments to these rules may be submitted directly to the Board or through the Covenant Ministerium to the Board. Such amendments when approved by the Board shall be submitted to the Covenant Ministerium for approval and to the Annual Meeting of the ECC for adoption.