

MICHIGAN

DISTRICT

PATHWAY

TO MINISTRY

**HOW TO RECEIVE A MINISTERIAL LICENSE
IN THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT
UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH INTERNATIONAL**

IMPORTANT!

Do not continue with any phase of licensing application until you have read this booklet in its entirety. This process is detailed and involves the time and effort of many people. Each step is important and mandatory. To omit or mishandle any requirement will result in a failed application.

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FORWARD

PATHWAY TO MINISTRY IN THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT outlines the path a ministerial candidate in the Michigan District United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) must follow; from the point an applicant senses a call of God all the way to receiving a license. Each applicant must meet definite requirements to qualify, which include: possessing a basic knowledge of the Bible, fulfilling various assignments, and following through with procedural steps as stated in the Manual of the UPCI. The purpose of this booklet is to clarify this pathway. Applicants should become familiar with the entire process so that nothing is overlooked which may prevent a qualified candidate from obtaining a license. A secondary purpose for this material is to supply vital information to Michigan District pastors. Since the process has changed to a great extent in the past few years, this booklet will help them respond to requests for a license from those in their congregations who believe they have heard the call of God to minister.

The Michigan District Board meets each person who professes a call to the ministry with a sincere desire to facilitate his or her efforts to become licensed. At the same time, because the ministry must be held in the highest regard, the board has a solemn obligation to thoroughly examine each candidate's life, qualifications, attitudes, and fundamental beliefs. This ensures we maintain a ministerial constituency that faithfully represents the scriptural mandate for the office. The candidate should understand that the purpose of this process is not to discourage the application, but to promote excellence and true commitment to the ministry.

In a birds-eye view of the application process, it begins with the call of God on the individual, then progresses to the pastor, the presbyter, and the district board. If there are questions about the applicant, the UPCI Executive Board will review the decision of the district board and either confirm or deny the application. This booklet will explain each of these steps in greater detail.

May God bless you as you embrace your calling and move forward in your service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT MINISTRY IS ALL ABOUT

Few people see the majority of a minister's actual work-time activities. As a result, an outside observer may have misconceptions concerning the life and work of a minister. Preaching, teaching, and leading services comprise the average person's view of the pastor's job. Behind the scenes, however, untold hours are spent in study, prayer, planning, administration, visitation, counseling, and personal devotion. Added to these obligations are other burdens and stresses which are difficult to define. The weight of the church rests on the shoulders of the minister. Still, to many, the ministry seems to involve more glory than grit.

This description of the minister's job is not given to discourage anyone from entering the ministry, but rather to bring a sense of reality to the calling. When a person considers the minister's accountability to God, it is very sobering to assume this role. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). Whoever seeks the position of a pastor, teacher, evangelist, or any other kind of ministry from an idealistic perspective is in trouble from the outset. Such a person may be overwhelmed with the challenges of the office, and the consequences can be disastrous.

The ministry is about many things, but nearly all of them can be summed up in three words: people, life, and faith. People are unpredictable, the issues of life are inevitable, and faith is indispensable. Any candidate for the ministry who believes that people can be controlled; that life can be manipulated; or that faith in God is unnecessary, is not only destined to fail, but he or she will be plagued with disillusionment, bitterness, and resentment. The minister who adjusts to these realities, however, will find a rich and rewarding life in working for the kingdom of God.

First, ministry requires you to have direct interaction with people. This means that you are in the "people business." Everyone who comes to you must be treated fairly, sincerely, and receive the best help you can give. Moreover, those most likely to come to you have been hurt or rejected by others. The life of Christ perfectly illustrates this principle. He cared for the sinner, the poor, the destitute, the outcast, and the sickly. He said, "Come unto me all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NIV). You cannot

avoid those you may think are undesirable, and you must not manipulate people or treat them with prejudice. On the other hand, you must also be prepared to interact with the gifted, the successful, and the high achievers in life. Revelation 22:17 includes the entire spectrum of humanity when it says “whosoever will” may come.

Second, when you embrace the full spectrum of humanity, you necessarily become involved in the issues of individuals’ lives. These issues are as diverse as the people themselves. Marital problems, financial difficulties, addictions, relationship conflicts, and personal psychological and emotional problems are some of the more common situations with which people need help. Add to that their spiritual problems and need for training in the Scriptures, and the full picture starts to develop. The minister will be called upon to be—among other things—a counselor, a coach, a mediator, a confidante, an intercessor, a friend, as well as a preacher and teacher. The baggage people carry cannot be separated from them. Moreover, most people travel life’s pathway in stops and starts. Even when they receive all the tools they need to succeed, they often have setbacks and disappointments. You are to rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep.

Finally, you need to be an endless supply of faith, both for the people to whom you minister and to your own self and your relationship to God. This requires an active prayer life, a continual and intense quest for the operation of God’s Spirit in your life, and a comprehensive grasp of the scriptures. It is a major mistake to think that the demands of the ministry can be met through carnal means. It takes an intimate walk with God to be the minister you must be to the people God has placed in your care. This is really what ministry is all about.

WHY A LICENSE?

Licensing its members represents the most critical function a ministerial organization performs. Licensing screens applicants for membership eligibility, ensures uniformity in doctrine, and enforces guidelines for the activities and behavior of individual members. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this function. The singular authority of the United Pentecostal Church International to grant or withhold a license ultimately governs its very nature and purpose. It has been said “as go the saints, so goes the church.” Likewise, as go the ministers, so goes an organization. All policies, provisions, rules, regulations, programs, missions, and visions proceed directly out of the hearts of the constituents.

Organization and licensing evolved out of conditions that followed the early stages of the twentieth-century revival. The times were so chaotic that they threatened to derail this spiritual upsurge. Strange doctrines and heretical ideologues took advantage of the movement’s unregulated landscape and caused untold damage to many sincere congregations. The Scripture warns us to “know them that labor among you,” but in those early days, many unfortunate things happened that were destabilizing and destructive. It soon became evident that all would be lost unless the ministry found a way to regulate itself. We are very grateful that the solution to these challenges eventually evolved into the United Pentecostal Church International.

In addition to the general concept of licensing, there are a number of practical reasons why each minister in the organization should have a license. Here are a few of them:

Approval. A ministerial license demonstrates that you have the approval of seasoned ministers who have examined your qualifications, character, references, and understanding of the Bible and deem you worthy of belonging to a fellowship of like-minded ministers. A license does not replace continued study, prayer, and dedication to the ministry, but it does offer a form of protection to UPCI congregations as well as enhance a minister’s standing among his peers.

Authority. When you receive credentials from the UPCI, you possess documentation issued by a governing board which attests to your qualifications. (Each licensed minister receives a certificate—for display or file—and a wallet-sized card to carry as proof of license). A licensed

minister does not operate under self-proclaimed authority but exercises his or her ministry with the strength and support of the organization.

Acceptance. Every professional community enjoys a sense of belongingness to a group of colleagues. It enables members to share experiences, ideas, and plans with others who have similar interests and backgrounds. Because the ministry is especially challenged in spiritual, emotional, and psychological ways, membership in this group of ministers is vitally important. It is comforting for you and your family to know you are accepted, valued, and understood by other ministers. In order to maintain this connectivity, the UPCI sponsors conferences, seminars, and special meetings that inform and inspire ministers. It also sends each minister a special magazine, THE FORWARD, as well as the official publication of the UPCI, THE PENTECOSTAL HERALD. The UPCI also sends frequent letters, e-mails, and special bulletins to all members to keep everyone informed. These communiqués are part of the ministers' benefits package paid for by the budget fee.

Accountability. One of the most important factors in guarding one's reputation is accountability. Not only does being accountable provide safety for one's own name, but it also assures the congregation and fellow ministers alike that integrity and honesty are priorities in the UPCI. No one, not even a minister, should place so much confidence in the flesh that he or she would discount the need to be answerable to someone in leadership.

The organizational architecture of the UPCI provides for a built-in system of accountability. Each minister has a sectional presbyter; each presbyter has a district superintendent; and each superintendent has a general superintendent and a general board that maintains authority over his retention of credentials. If a question arises about any licensed minister, the district board reserves the right to summon that minister for inquiry. Also, every two years, each minister must sign an affirmation statement verifying that he or she believes and adheres to the fundamental doctrines and practices of the UPCI. This signature is mandatory in order to retain one's license.

There are many benefits to licensing that will be mentioned later in this booklet. A license with the UPCI has value much greater than can be stated here. The best way to describe it is that it unites ministers in the fellowship with one mind and one accord. As the psalmist said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

KINDS OF MINISTRY

If you are aspiring to enter the ministry, you probably already have a specific kind of ministry you feel called to do. Yet, many times, a minister must venture into other activities that have little to do with his or her particular calling. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (II Timothy 4:5). It is possible that evangelism may not have been Timothy’s strong suit. He may have preferred teaching or studying over reaching the lost. He was admonished to “make full proof of thy ministry,” which means to “completely fulfill” the requirements of your position as a minister.

There are many different kinds of ministries, and God has especially equipped those He calls with the abilities and gifting to fulfill each special need. Even in early apostolic days, there were designations of kinds of ministries. Today, we have further refined the kinds of ministries that are needed in the church at large. Let’s look at these different categories:

Helper. Every church needs leaders who serve the congregation in cooperation with and under the authority of the pastor. If you have a desire to do a work for God but do not have a need for a ministerial license, then you may fulfill your calling in your local church under the direction of your pastor. Some have applied for a license but later realized their area of ministry did not extend beyond the local church. The UPCI has created a special license called a Christian Worker’s License for those who need some additional authority as a local church leader but do not need or cannot qualify for a license with the general fellowship of ministers. If this is a suitable path for you, and if the pastor approves you for this designation, then a certificate for this license may be obtained through the World Evangelism Center. The requirements for this license level are very minimal. The most important criterion is the pastor’s approval. For those who feel a definite call into the ministry, however, let us review the various kinds of ministries for which a license is necessary.

Senior Pastor. The senior pastor is the overseer and shepherd of a single congregation (some pastors oversee more than one congregation) and is the seat of spiritual authority in the local church. The senior pastor preaches, teaches, leads, presides over the business and financial matters of a church, and is generally in charge of the congregational affairs. This minister

represents the local congregation in all matters and becomes the face of the church to the community.

Assistant to the Senior Pastor. These are ministers with special assignments to work in prescribed areas, always under the authority and direction of the senior pastor. These areas may include outreach, visitation, youth, children, family, music, worship, business, and executive leadership. These ministries can be fluid, and ministers' job descriptions can evolve into other ministries. Many of these special ministers eventually become senior pastors. Formerly, assistants were not required to be licensed, but now many of them not only seek a license, but their work often demands that they be licensed (prison and hospital chaplains, for example). Today, the UPCI recognizes these specialty ministries as legitimate and as deserving of credentials as pastors or evangelists.

Evangelist. An evangelist is one who spreads the good news of the gospel. In today's setting, the evangelist travels from church to church, preaching to different congregations and primarily reaches out to the unchurched and those who need salvation. Just as in the pastoral ministry, there are different kinds of evangelists: youth, student, campus, children, prophetic, prison, and crusade evangelists, just to name a few. Our diverse culture calls for evangelists who have special ministries that relate to a specific segment of society.

Missionary. A missionary typically goes to an unchurched city, county, population center, or foreign country and plants a church or a group of churches. In case an organized church or churches exist, the missionary oversees the work. A missionary may fulfill all the duties and obligations of other kinds of ministries, but it is usually in a venue far from home, and usually with financial support from the sending organization.

Teacher. A minister with a gift for teaching may be resident in a local congregation or may travel to many congregations to teach the Word of God. The teacher is especially gifted to help people better understand the Bible or learn how to apply spiritual principles to their lives. He or she may also work in a Christian education area, whether in children's ministries, academic K-12 settings, or at college levels. The purpose of this ministry is not necessarily to motivate or lead people to Christ but to strengthen and equip them to be more productive disciples. Again, as with assistants to the pastor, there is now widespread recognition of the teacher as a legitimate ministry and worthy of a license.

There are a number of other specialized ministries that cover a wide range of areas, and all are vital to the life of the church at large. Along with the few that have been mentioned are counseling ministers, stewardship ministers, ministers involved in organizational oversight at district or general levels, and ministers who direct para-church ministries like orphanages, half-way houses, recovery ministries, and evangelistic organizations. All of these are legitimate ministries to which God has called men and women. The diversity of ministries reflects the complicated needs of the twenty-first century culture.

PATHS OF PREPARATION

Training for ministry has been required since the days of the apostles. Paul wrote to Timothy “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15). The rigorous demands of ministry today require even more intense training and preparation than in the first century. The minister is not only expected to have knowledge in the scriptures, church polity, and tenets of faith, but also in many other fields. In order to help meet these expectations, the United Pentecostal Church International endorses several Bible colleges, a Christian liberal arts college, and a seminary, plus a number of other educational options. Let us look at the available choices to prepare one for the ministry.

Bible College. Traditionally, anyone interested in becoming a minister has been directed to attend a Bible college. UPCI endorsed Bible colleges include Apostolic Bible Institute (St. Paul, MN), Indiana Bible College (Indianapolis, IN), Centro Teologico Ministerial (Channelview, TX), Northeast Christian College (Fredericton, NB), Christian Life College (Stockton, CA), and Texas Bible College (Lufkin, TX). All of these schools offer diplomas or bachelor’s degrees in various fields of study. Urshan College is a liberal arts college but offers a qualifying degree in Christian ministries. Urshan Graduate School of Theology (UGST in Florissant, MO) offers master’s degrees beyond the Bible college level. The Manual of the UPCI provides for

recognition by a district board for a general license for anyone who completes three years of study at one of these institutions.

“Theological students (majoring in religion) who complete three (3) years of Bible training in any Bible college endorsed by the United Pentecostal Church International, and who otherwise qualify, may be granted either a Local or General License at the discretion of the District Board of the district in which they establish their legal residence.” (Article 7, Section 4, Paragraph 3).

All UPCI Bible colleges require students to be residents and attend traditional classes as prescribed by the college. Some colleges are now instituting distance learning programs for select classes. UGST even operates an extensive distance learning program. Any prospective minister who chooses to attend one of these institutions must consult with the college for specific requirements and information.

Purpose Institute. For ministerial students who cannot or who do not choose to attend one of the aforementioned colleges, the Michigan District Board has chosen Purpose Institute as the preferred arm of training for ministry. This training program is organized to conduct classes on a Friday and Saturday once a month, with four weekends comprising one semester. An associates diploma in ministerial studies may be obtained in four semesters. A bachelor’s diploma may be earned in eight semesters. There is currently one campus (or anticipated campus) in each of the seven sections of the Michigan District. More information may be found at www.purposeinstitute.com. Bishop F. Joe Ellis is the CEO of Purpose Institute.

It is important to note that mere attendance at an endorsed college or Purpose Institute is not a guarantee for licensing. Each applicant must also agree to have his or her academic record forwarded to the district board by the institution. The school must also send a confidential Bible school report, which is a separate record. These records will be reviewed by the board. If the applicant had failing grades or has an otherwise unsatisfactory scholastic report, it will factor into the final decision the board must make concerning one’s license.

Alternative Routes. It is highly recommended that each candidate for the ministry enroll in a Bible college or in Purpose Institute. It is possible, however, that neither option is feasible for some applicants. In that case, a third alternative exists to obtain a license. The main features of this training are 1) completing a book list of required reading 2) a comprehensive test over the entire Bible and the Manual of the UPCI, with a minimum passing grade of seventy-five percent; and 3) documentation that the applicant has preached on the average of one time each

week over a designated period, depending on the level of license desired 4) Should special circumstances dictate, the Bible test may be administered verbally 5) Should conditions necessitate, the board may make any exceptions it deems appropriate as long as the decisions are not in conflict with any national requirements 6) The board may consider life experiences, other factors, and special circumstances at its discretion.

Regardless of the path of preparation the applicant pursues, it is necessary for each one to properly complete the application form, meet with the presbyter, provide all the necessary documentation, and be examined by the entire board. These steps will be detailed in the remainder of this booklet.

FIRST STEPS

Anyone applying for a ministerial license with the UPCI must have first experienced full Bible salvation according to Acts 2:38, must fully believe and embrace the doctrinal position of the UPCI, and be currently living an overcoming life. Moreover, the applicant should be deeply involved in ministry in the local church and possess an exemplary character and reputation. The scriptures teach us that faithfulness is required among managers (see I Corinthians 4:2). If a person feels a call to the ministry but has major personal or spiritual problems, then much work needs to be done before qualifying for a license. Any applicant who has ever been convicted of child abuse or attempted or actual sexual abuse of a child is not qualified for license with the UPCI. Also, if the applicant has ever been convicted of a felony, the board will examine the record closely to determine whether a license should be granted.

As soon as the applicant feels a call on his or her life, the first step is to earnestly seek out the will of God through fasting, prayer, and reading the Bible. At this stage, these feelings can be very confusing and even frightening. It may be that God is only speaking to the individual about

a closer spiritual walk and not issuing a call to the ministry. If the person feels that the call is persistent and will not go away, then he or she should consider the ministry more seriously in terms of its impact and implications. This requires a deep spiritual assessment of the person's life, but it also calls for some very practical considerations as well.

From a practical standpoint, here are some questions that should be asked of one who thinks God is calling him or her into the ministry. 1) How old are you? If you are too young or too old, the hurdles may be unlikely—if not impossible—to overcome, at least at the present time. 2) What are your life's circumstances? If you are married with several children, the attempt to prepare yourself for ministry may be unrealistic or have a negative impact on your family. 3) What kind of encumbrances do you have in life? If you are deeply committed to a job, heavily indebted, or have serious health issues, you may not be a candidate for the ministry. God may work miracles for you to put you into the ministry, but it is incumbent upon you to use wisdom as well. It is never right to shirk one area of responsibility in order to embrace another.

If and when a prospective minister senses a definite call of God to the ministry and knows it is time to act, then it is absolutely necessary to schedule a meeting with the pastor. The pastor is the spiritual authority in the local church, and it should be apparent that his or her approval is the first stepping stone to ministry. The pastor also knows the applicant's life and experience and will be able to provide counseling to the applicant so a wise choice may be made. The applicant should know that the Michigan District Board will not consider any applicant without the recommendation and signature of the local pastor.

Should the pastor agree that the expressed call is legitimate, the next step is to call the sectional presbyter to begin the process of licensing. The presbyters will then speak with the candidate, send him or her application forms, and schedule an interview. Next, we will look at each of these steps to see what each one entails.

THE APPLICATION FORM

When an applicant begins the licensing process, a comprehensive application form must be completed. Although it may seem obvious, when you fill out the application form, you must write legibly, make sure factual information is answered correctly, and supply all the requested documentation. You will be asked to redo the application if it cannot be read. Requested information includes questions about bankruptcies, legal problems, divorce, and remarriage issues. In case of a divorce and/or remarriage, be advised that copies of court documents will be requested along with signed statements or letters that contain specific statements that affirm your innocence after the point in time you received the Holy Ghost. Your presbyter will inform you as to the nature of these statements. Without this documentation, your application will be automatically rejected. You will also be asked for permission to conduct a mandatory credit check. It is important that you answer every question on the application form. If a question or request for information on the form is not clear, you should consult the presbyter for an explanation. Any question the applicant leaves blank will ultimately be brought to the attention of the district board.

The application form contains questions that may only be answered by specific information contained in the Manual of the UPCI. If the candidate has not thoroughly read the manual, it will become apparent when the form is completed. Among the questions are specific doctrinal positions and terminology with which the average layperson is unfamiliar. For example, be sure you understand the concepts of the eternal punishment of the wicked, divine flesh, and preterism, along with other doctrinal positions you may not presently know.

On this application, it is better to supply more information than seems necessary rather than little or no information. Answer fully any question that gives you the opportunity to tell about yourself. You should tell about souls you have won to Christ, your experiences in teaching home Bible studies, and any unusual opportunities you have had to minister and any outstanding results you have had through your ministry.

Finally, two more items must accompany your application: a current picture of yourself (married applicants must also send a photo of their spouse), and cash or a check that will cover the first month budget fee plus administrative charges. This payment is not refundable.

INITIAL INTERVIEW

Meeting with the presbyter of your section is a critical step in the licensing process. If you are married, both you and your spouse are required to attend. If you have been sent the application form, you should have completed it and will give it to the presbyter at this interview. The interview may last an half an hour or longer, depending on the discussion about the application. Also, it will take longer if the presbyter uses the time to administer the initial test.

This interview fulfills several purposes. He needs to gain a first impression of you and assess your appearance, your attitude, and your general demeanor. Also, the presbyter needs to administer the basic test of scriptural knowledge to you, discuss your progress in reading the required book list, inform you of the all the specific requirements of the application process, and answer any question you may have about the process or the ministry in general.

The presbyter will not be a “rubber stamp” for your desire to enter the ministry. He is obligated to seriously examine your qualifications and determine whether he will recommend you to the board for a license. His voice on the district board carries more weight than any other because you are from his section. The ultimate decision will rest heavily on this interview and the presbyter’s impression of your candidacy.

After the initial interview, anything amiss with the application form should be corrected. Also, any required documentation that has not yet been submitted should be given. The presbyter will then present the completed application form to the board at the following meeting for review. If everything is in order, you will be scheduled to meet the entire board at its next meeting. That is approximately a six month waiting period. This intervening time will allow you to satisfy any unfulfilled requirements or make any corrections to the application form.

MEETING THE BOARD

The prospect of meeting the district board is undoubtedly the most stressful part of the licensing process. To walk in before a room full of men whom you may have never met and feel their eyes on your every move and know that they are critiquing every word you say can be very intimidating. You should know, however, that these are compassionate and anointed men of God who want you to succeed, perhaps even more than you do yourself. While their experience and wisdom temper their judgment, rest assured that they treat each candidate with kindness and respect.

The board consists of the district superintendent, the district secretary/treasurer, a presbyter from each of the seven sections in Michigan, and several honorary presbyters. After your presbyter introduces you, he will ask you to explain your call into the ministry. Be as succinct as possible, but make sure your response includes all the significant points of the call of God on your life. If your pursuit of license has brought you this far, the board knows you are serious and that you have something substantial to say. You should also be prepared to relate your current responsibilities and activities in ministering at your local church. The board is very interested in how you have demonstrated your burden and commitment to the work of God prior to becoming licensed.

You should be ready to tell the board how you have prepared yourself for ministry and how you continue to gain personal growth and understanding of the Word of God. Your personal devotional life is of great concern to the members of the board so you need to inform them about your prayer life, how you impose spiritual discipline on your life, and for those applicants who are married and have children, how you demonstrate spiritual leadership in your home.

On your application form, you will be asked about your credit history, bankruptcy, divorce, and remarriage. If any of these are applicable, you should be ready to give an explanation. Make sure you have included the proper documentation. These sensitive subjects will be handled confidentially. Because they are germane to your reputation as a minister, and they have implications for liability issues for the Michigan District and the UPCI, the board does need to examine them.

At some point, the interview will be opened up to the board to ask any other question that may occur to any member. There may be something in your background, some response you gave on your application, or something else that has piqued the interest of the presbyter. There is no way to predict what these questions may be. Do your best to respond as sincerely and thoroughly as possible.

For married applicants, it is necessary for your spouse to accompany you to the interview. He or she will be asked some relevant questions as well. Since both husband and wife in ministry constitute a team, it is important for the board to hear the spouse's response to ministry.

The district board meets for one week in both the spring and fall to conduct interviews with applicants for license. Your presbyter will tell you what day and time you will meet. An effort will be made to make the interview amenable to your schedule. Because the nature of the board's business is so unpredictable, you may not be summoned precisely at the scheduled time of your interview. You should be prepared to wait.

THE BOARD'S DECISION

The constitution of the UPCI gives licensing power to each district board. Aside from a few general rules that must be uniformly observed, the district board's task is to examine each applicant and vote to either grant or deny a license. Both decisions have significant consequences. Before you enter the process, you should be prepared for the decision, however it may go.

LICENSE GRANTED

If you are granted a license, you will be informed by your presbyter and brought back into the boardroom for a charge, followed by laying on of hands and prayer. At that time, you will receive instructions about certain obligations you now have as a licensed minister, such as when your budget fee and district dues are to be paid. Our international headquarters, World Evangelism Center in Hazelwood, Missouri, will process the paperwork and send your credentials to the district superintendent for his signature. He will then forward them to you. This usually takes several weeks or even months. Your status as a licensed minister takes effect immediately, even though you have not received your written credentials.

There is also the possibility that a candidate has applied for higher level of license, but the board granted a lower level. Licensing levels will be explained in later paragraphs. There are several reasons why this may happen. The candidate may not have qualified for a higher license due to the provisions in the manual. Given the circumstances of the candidate, there may be times the board feels there is no need for a higher level. Should those circumstances change in coming years, the candidate is welcome to reapply. Finally, the candidate may not have demonstrated the spiritual maturity or experience necessary for the higher level of license. If this happens, the candidate should not feel that he or she has been rejected. The fact remains that a license has been granted, even though it was not at the anticipated level. Again, after gaining more maturity and experience for a year or more, the candidate may go through the process again for an upgrade.

LICENSE NOT GRANTED

It is with much regret that any applicant is told that the board has declined to grant a license. Although it happens infrequently, the board can find that the applicant does not possess the necessary attributes that warrant licensing, or some fact or trait in the life of the applicant has precluded the granting of license. Any time one enters into a process like this, there is always a risk it will prove unsuccessful. This sometimes leads to discouragement and embarrassment for the applicant. Should this be your outcome, you must not allow disappointment to overwhelm you. You may have had unrealistic expectations from the start. Bitterness, resentment, or any negative reaction on your part will only serve to reinforce the board's decision. You must make a conscious and intentional decision to accept this decision as the will of God for this time and continue on in the work you have been doing. Remember, you still have a ministry in your local

church, you still have relationships that are meaningful to you, and you still have great value in the kingdom of God.

If you are denied a license, you will be given the news gently and with sensitivity. You will be given a full explanation of the reasoning of the board. If there are some things that—with correction or improvement—will qualify you in the future, you may be encouraged to try again.

LEVELS OF LICENSE

The following paragraphs about the levels of license are adapted from the UPCI Ministers Manual.

LOCAL LICENSE

1. All applicants must be seventeen (17) years of age or over.
2. All applicants must have preached an average of one (1) sermon each week for a period of six (6) months or more before being examined by the District Board in relation to their call to the ministry. Exceptions to this requirement would be left to the discretion of the District Board. (It is understood that teaching a Sunday school class or leading services does not meet this requirement.)
3. All local licensed ministers are to labor in full cooperation with, and under the supervision of, their local United Pentecostal Church pastor until they enter into ministerial responsibilities severing them from their local assembly.

GENERAL LICENSE

1. All applicants must be nineteen (19) years of age or over.

2. All applicants must be presently engaged in the ministry as pastor, full-time evangelist, full-time teacher, assistant pastor, assistant to the pastor, elected or appointed official, full-time Bible school administrator, or instructor, except those qualifying under Paragraph 3. Exceptions to this requirement would be left to the discretion of the District Board.
3. Theological students (majoring in religion) who complete three (3) years of Bible training in any Bible college endorsed by the United Pentecostal Church International, and who otherwise qualify, may be granted either a Local or General License at the discretion of the District Board of the district in which they establish their legal residence. These students shall request their respective colleges to send the Bible College Report form to the District Superintendent. In no event shall the students be granted a license from the district in which the Bible College is located unless they are actively engaged in the ministry in that district prior to and at the time of licensing.
4. All applicants who are not Bible College graduates must have held Local License for at least one (1) year. They must also have proven their ministry for a period of one (1) year or more. During said time, applicants must have preached an average of one (1) sermon each week. (It is understood that teaching a Sunday school class or leading services does not meet this requirement.) Exceptions may be made for applicants who are being accepted from another church organization. (See Section 5, Paragraph 4.)

CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION

1. All applicants must be twenty-one (21) years of age or over and must have held General License for at least two (2) years. Any exception to this would be left to the discretion of the District Board.
2. All applicants must have proven their ministry for two (2) consecutive years and must presently be an active pastor, full-time evangelist, assistant pastor, appointed or elected official, full-time Bible college administrator or instructor.
3. All applicants for Ordination to Military Chaplaincy must fulfill all doctrinal and other qualifications except the specified time of active ministerial service and the need to hold General License prior to applying.
4. All applicants who have previously been ordained by another church organization shall appear before the District Board and be thoroughly examined to determine the merits of their ordination and their qualifications for the ministry. The District Board shall determine whether to accept their former ordination, recommend ordination by the United Pentecostal Church International, or grant Local or General License.

5. All applicants endorsed for ordination shall be notified by the District Secretary as to the next official meeting where they may be ordained.

6. An ordination may be held at any district meeting and must be presided over by a member of the Board of General Presbyters. A district meeting includes regular or special called District Conferences, conventions, or camp meetings to which all of the ministers of the district are invited. It does not include fellowship meetings, youth rallies, or other sectional gatherings.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A UPCI LICENSE

There are many benefits to holding a license with the UPCI. Some of them are listed here.

Official fellowship. When a minister becomes licensed with the UPCI, he or she owns a certificate recognized by peers, whether it be local, general, or ordination. Not only does this certification have significant personal meaning, but it also has a legal effect on the minister's status insofar as governmental agencies are concerned.

Representation on a national and international level. Often, the UPCI speaks for the entire ministerial body to the nation. Our general superintendent has written letters to the President of the United States from time to time on social, moral, and legal matters that pertain to the church. Official membership also incurs benefits to individual ministers such as the right to visit or administer baptism to incarcerated persons.

Right to have a voice and vote. Every individual minister in the UPCI may influence the decisions made at the sectional, district, or national level. It includes the right to speak out in an official meeting of ministers, communicate with elected officials, and write any personal views and publish them in a letter or send them to a district or general publication. Moreover, in

district and national elections, full-time ministers can vote for or against candidates or issues. Without a license, a minister has no such rights.

Practical, informal fellowship. One of the great joys of belonging to the UPCI continues to be the rich and edifying fellowship among the general body of ministers. Licensed ministers have a compelling reason to converse with their colleagues about organizational matters, about plans and developments on a national or international scale, and about all the people who are performing various tasks in the organization. They share in the give-and-take of social dynamics that take place among those who occupy common ground.

Other rights, privileges, and benefits. Since the UPCI is a recognized, ordaining body, each minister has a legitimate basis for ordination. The organization represents and protects the member. The minister can appeal to the judicial procedure if ever accused of misconduct. In case the minister encounters problems in the local church, an automatic appeal to a presbyter or district superintendent is possible. The minister also maintains insurance or other benefits provided by the organization. Licensed ministers draw much strength from the backing of an organization.

Opportunity for ministerial functions. Licensed ministers are eligible to participate in functions of the UPCI at any level. If appointed or elected, members can belong to committees or boards, not as a mere observer but as a participant in crafting policy and making decisions. There are provisions in the manual that govern these activities.

Access to special ministries in the UPCI. Children and young people of churches pastored by licensed ministers may attend UPCI functions such as camps, retreats, and conferences with their pastor's signature on their registration form. They can come by right, not mere courtesy. Another ministry of the UPCI is "Points of Refuge." It is a group of professional and highly trained counselors who will provide support to ministers experiencing personal problems. There are many other ministries of the divisions of the UPCI as well.

Access to UPCI Bible colleges. As in the case of youth and children's camps, Bible college applicants need the signature of a UPCI pastor. If a student's pastor is not a member of the UPCI, he or she is at a clear disadvantage from applicants from UPCI churches.

Hosting privileges. One of the great blessings of many churches is the privilege to host a district conference, a rally, or some other special meeting. These meetings expose local

community and church members to the ministry of highly respected and renowned ministers, and they see the wide influence and stature of the organization. Local pastors gain stature and strength from their involvement in the UPCI.

Input into divisional or departmental ministry. God has blessed many ministers with a wonderful creative ability and a vision that extends far beyond their local church. The UPCI affords a venue for expressing and utilizing these talents at every level. Whether in administration, Christian education, youth work, planting churches, global missions service, or some other field, a UPCI minister may find fulfillment in organizational work.

Freedom to engage UPCI ministers to preach. UPCI pastors enjoy an unrestricted right to ask anyone licensed with the organization to come and speak in their pulpit without requesting clearance. Our protocol stipulates for UPCI pastors to get special permission before engaging any non-affiliated ministers to preach. This provision helps to protect the integrity of the fellowship.

Along with these benefits, however, there are also responsibilities attached. Organization among ministers cannot exist without responsible fellowship. What each minister does or fails to do will affect every other minister. We should all be accountable, submissive, and respectful to each other. We cannot expect the blessings of fellowship if we do not shoulder the difficulties. Each minister ought to submit to provisions he or she may not personally like; that is responsible fellowship. It is not always easy, but it is always best. Here are the basic responsibilities that fall to the licensed minister:

- Pay the required budget fee.
- Attend organizational meetings at every level.
- Sign the affirmation statement.
- Support the various divisions and fund drives.
- Speak positively about the organization.

The tests of time confirm the needs and benefits of organization. Actually, licensing expands a minister's effectiveness and ministerial potential far beyond the level he or she could otherwise reach. Not only does a preacher personally benefit from having a license, but the ministerial body as a whole needs the strength of the organization to be effective. In our diverse and mobile society, organization ensures uniformity on major tenets of faith.

FINAL WORDS

The Michigan District Board has created this booklet in an effort to clarify the licensing process and explain each step along the way. We hope it will make the pathway easier to follow. We see a growing need for more men and women to enter the ministry, and if those who indeed have a genuine call of God on their lives are not hesitant or are not intimidated by the process, then this effort will have succeeded.

The ministry has its stressful moments and presents great challenges almost every day, but the rewards are rich and fulfilling. In the end, there is nothing more satisfying than doing God's will. If you feel a call into the service of the King, do not dismiss it as an insignificant notion. Fervently pray, diligently seek, and willingly enquire of God what He would have you to do. If God wants you to be a minister, the United Pentecostal Church International and the Michigan District stand ready to help you prepare and become qualified for your high, heavenly, hopeful, and holy calling!

May God bless you in your quest to serve Him.

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