



Entering the Ministry

A guide to those seeking an **initial** entrance into the ministry in an AGC church at any level or position. The steps are outlined from initial contact right through to Induction and eventually Ordination.

Whether the potential candidate approaches the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee or a church approaches a person for ministry in that church, the steps are the same. In order to assist churches find their new pastor and in order to assist pastors to discover their place of ministry, the following procedures have been developed.

I. ASCERTAINMENT OF COMPATIBILITY

In order to be considered as a candidate in the AGC for any ministry position, including pastoral ministry, it is necessary and wise to determine whether a person is sufficiently compatible with the AGC before proceeding further.

The **COMPATIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE WITH ITS ACCOMPANYING REFERENCES** are our tools for determining if we ought to consider a person for ministry. If it is used correctly it will indicate immediately whether a person holds to any belief or practice that will make it unlikely or even impossible for effective ministry to take place in an AGC church. Repeatedly tension, trouble, and sometimes termination result because a basic, straight forward question was not asked, or the uncertainty of an answer was ignored. This process will help avoid injury to ministry personnel and churches. It is also a fast and efficient way to obtain basic data and initial references on a potential candidate.

The **COMPATIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE** gathers personal information, educational background, ministry and employment information, church affiliation, and Christian service experience. It includes a very brief testimony and responses to the candidate's understanding of the AGC doctrinal statement and policies. This preliminary screening allows the candidate, the church, and the committee an opportunity to identify any beliefs, policies and/or practices that would be a hindrance to a wholehearted ministry in the AGC.

A **COMPATIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE**, including information about the AGC is available through the AGC office, the AGC website – www.agcofcanada.com or any officer of the AGC. Every church of the AGC, particularly a church seeking a person for a ministerial position will be free to request that a questionnaire with information be sent to any person they wish to consider.

II. AFFIRMATION OF COMPATIBILITY

After all forms are returned to the Regional Chair of the Doctrine and Credentials Committee, the questionnaire will be evaluated and compatibility either established or denied. Affirmation of compatibility does **not** constitute final approval of the candidate who seeks pastoral ministry. However, a church is free to hear, interview and determine whether they wish to proceed toward calling a pastor or staff member who has affirmed compatibility from the Chair of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee.

NOTE: An **INTERVIEW** will follow the completion and examination of the **COMPATIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE** by the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee. This interview is most effective when it involves leaders from the church considering the individual for a pastoral or staff position.

III. COMPATIBILITY STATUS

Our Association differs from other associations and denominations in that it has three possible areas to its credentialing which allow a church (with the Association) to celebrate the growth, increasing responsibility and achievement of the individuals in ministry within it. These areas should not, however, be construed to imply that those who have lesser credentials are not recognized as functioning as “regular ministers” within their churches.

Our Compatibility Questionnaire and interview process is a significant step often leading to an exam. Anyone who has gone through that process and has their Compatibility Questionnaire approved and on file at the office, and who is ministering in a local church or approved para-church organization is to be recognized by the AGC as credentialed for the purpose of qualification for “clergy housing”. Their service title and role in the church will be determined by the church or organization they serve.

The AGC recognizes three Compatibility Ministry Areas:

Ministry Candidate
Ministry Certificate
Ordained Ministry

1. MINISTRY CANDIDATE

This is the starting place for anyone desiring employment in a ministry position in an AGC church and allows their name to stand as a candidate. This designation, open to both men and women, would also cover administrative, clerical or some interim positions. It would terminate when a person is no longer employed with the AGC (although compatibility may be retained).

To obtain this designation a candidate must satisfactorily complete a Compatibility Questionnaire and an interview.

2. MINISTRY CERTIFICATE

This designation is applied to those who are employed in an AGC church and desire to pursue ministry in greater depth in a church service role, as associate pastoral staff, interim pastors, or pre-ordained pastors.

This certification is open to males and females that are pursuing careers as camp directors, chaplains, missionaries, evangelists, faculty at schools and colleges, counsellors, etc. These various kinds of ministry each have their own unique set of requirements for competency as outlined below.

To obtain this designation a candidate must satisfactorily complete a Compatibility Questionnaire and interview, maintain affiliation with a local AGC church for accountability and be assigned a mentor (if possible).

3. ORDAINED MINISTRY

This designation is applied to males only who have had the above “Ministry Certificate” or “Ministry Candidate” designation for at least two years and successfully completed a second interview with the Doctrine & Credentials Committee. The call to ministry would then be recognized with an Ordination Service. This applies to pastors, missionaries or other appropriate Association leaders. Pastors entering the AGC who have been ordained with another denomination may have that previous ordination recognized by the AGC by successfully completing the Compatibility Questionnaire and interview.

IV. REGARDING STATUS BEFORE REVENUE CANADA OF CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS

The Associated Gospel Churches recognize the following individuals to be considered as “regular ministers” within the Association.

Any individual who has minimally:

1. completed the Associated Gospel Churches Compatibility Questionnaire,
and
2. been approved by letter from a Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee with a copy in the AGC office,
and
3. been voted on at the Board or congregational level for a ministry position in a local church or Fair Havens,
and
4. is presently and actively employed in a church, Fair Havens and/or administrative position within the Association.

V. EXAMINATION OF PASTORAL CANDIDATES

Before a person is presented to the congregation as a pastoral candidate and before a vote to present him as a candidate is taken by a Pulpit Search Committee or board, the candidate must be interviewed by the appointed representatives of the Doctrine and Credentials Committee. Ideally, the meeting should be at the church which is considering the call and should be attended by the following:

- the candidate
- representatives from the Search Committee or board of the church
- two area pastors of the AGC
- the Doctrine and Credentials Committee representatives

The examination will be presided over by the Chair of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee or his designate. This meeting is designed to serve the church. All of the questions asked and matters discussed with the candidate are of vital importance to the church. This will not only assist the church in a thorough examination, but it will avoid duplication and allow all matters of concern to be understood mutually.

The Examination will result in the granting of “Ministry Candidate”, “Ministry Certificate” or “Ordained Ministry” status.

VI. CONGREGATIONAL DECISION

Upon approval by the Doctrine and Credentials Committee, the Search Committee or board of a church is free to present the candidate to the congregation for their consideration. This may lead to a vote to issue a call to the candidate. The candidate is also free to respond to such a call according to the Lord's leading.

VII. INDUCTION INTO THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

When a call, having been issued in accordance with the above, is duly accepted, it will be the responsibility of the officials of the AGC to conduct a Service of Induction as soon as possible after a pastor is settled into a new church ministry. The church board shall request that such a service be conducted by the AGC at a time and with a speaker acceptable to the Associated Gospel Churches.

This is a public recognition of a union between two entities: the local body and a man of God who will be its pastor. At the service, vows will be expressed by the pastor and commitments made by the church membership. It is a time of rejoicing to which outside churches and Christian organizations may be invited.

Information for planning an Induction Service is available from AGC officials or the AGC website: www.agcofcanada.com

VIII. ORDINATION

In the case of a man previously ordained by a recognized church body, his approval by the Doctrine and Credentials Committee will constitute the recognition of such previous ordination, provided that he has had a minimum of three years of well-attested and effective ministry subsequent to such previous ordination.

In the case of a man not previously ordained or whose previous ordination is not recognized, he shall be required to complete a minimum of two years of effective ministry subsequent to induction and prior to ordination (or having his ordination recognized). Consideration may be given to certain unique situations to waive this requirement.

Further conditions such as guided study, reading, or formal study may need to be met before ordination as a result of the initial examination, or subsequent interview with the Doctrine and Credentials Committee.

Ordination may take place when all the conditions have been satisfied. The board of the church in which the pastor ministers shall request that an Ordination Service be conducted by the AGC at a time and with a speaker acceptable to the Associated Gospel Churches. An Ordination Service is a worship service where there is a recognition by a local church of their pastor's gifts and calling to the gospel ministry.

Information for planning an Ordination Service is available from AGC officials or the AGC website: www.agcofcanada.com

IX. APPROVED STATUS IN THE AGC

It is the responsibility of an AGC church to be certain when considering a person for a ministry position that official status has been granted by the Doctrine and Credentials Committee. Compatibility and a status designation must be received at the appropriate level for the position to be held by the staff member.

X. STANDARDS AND QUALIFICATION FOR MINISTRY IN THE AGC

The Doctrine and Credentials Committee seeks to maintain in the AGC a high level of sound, biblically based preaching by well qualified persons. We seek to uphold excellence of training backed by proven experience. Holiness of life, integrity of service, and purity of testimony in both the church and the community are essential.

Any candidate who applies for ministry or for a leadership position in the AGC will be considered, at the time of application, on the basis of spiritual, ethical and moral qualifications.

Spiritual qualifications for ministry are set out in I Timothy 3:2-7; and Titus 1:6-9.

Ethical qualifications for ministry include financial integrity, family stability, and a consistently good reputation in the community.

Moral qualifications are a reputation for sexual purity and respect for life. Such things as fornication, sexual addiction, adultery, homosexuality (approving, promoting or practicing), incest and other sexually deviant behaviour, abusive behaviour, or the support of abortion, euthanasia, etc. will bar a person from ministry in the Associated Gospel Churches.

In general, we look for evidence of a strong faith, a clear call, a separated life, and the qualities of gift, character, and personality necessary to an effective pastoral ministry.

The candidate for ministry must demonstrate:

1. SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

As a believer in Jesus Christ, a candidate should be growing in spiritual integrity, and be a person spiritually gifted and called to Christian ministry.

A sound testimony and references clearly supporting spiritual standards are a basic requirement.

2. LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Personal and relational skills of leadership are necessary to lead and build a congregation.

Leadership ability will be validated by clear supporting experience, giving evidence of these skills and some grasp of the principles involved in the practice of leadership. It shall call for a minimum of one year of experience in a leadership role.

3. EXPERIENCE IN MINISTRY

An understanding of the issues involved in church ministry is important to good leadership. He must have a personal history of faithfulness as well as effectiveness in a local church ministry.

Ministry experience should be supported by references, testimony and, in the case of a newcomer to ministry, a minimum of two years of training and experience.

4. A SUITABLE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Candidates should be a graduate of an approved school of learning and possess academic skills and training appropriate for the ministry. The order of priority is as follows:

- a. A graduate degree from a college or seminary.
- b. An undergraduate degree from a Christian college and extensive experience.
- c. Adequate experience to satisfy the needs of their ministry.

XI. EXAMINATION

The candidate for ministry must pass an oral examination designed to demonstrate his ability to:

- a. Testify to a definite calling or leading into the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- b. Articulate a biblical philosophy of ministry.
- c. Understand and communicate the content of the Bible.
- d. Affirm and defend the doctrine of the AGC.

This will be validated by the examining interview held with the Pulpit Search Committee and/or board of the church considering extending a call and the Doctrine and Credentials Committee prior to the candidate preaching for a call.

XII. CONTENTS OF THE EXAMINATION

Questions will be asked at the interview under the four general areas given above:

1. "Testify to a definite calling or leading into the ministry of Jesus Christ".
 - a. Testimony of salvation.
 - b. History of spiritual development (including the influence of education and experience).
 - c. Spiritual gifts.
 - d. Calling or leading into the ministry.
 - e. Knowledge of the AGC, its history and purpose.
 - f. Reasons for identifying with the AGC.
 - g. Any other question in this area.

2. "Articulate a biblical philosophy of ministry".
 - a. Explanation of, and development of personal philosophy of ministry.
 - i. Personal spiritual growth
 - ii. Sermon preparation
 - iii. Building relationships in ministry
 - iv. Counselling and visitation
 - b. Explanation of biblical basis for philosophy of ministry as given.
 - c. Explanation of successes and failures in the implementation of the philosophy presented.
 - d. Testimony of the ability to communicate this philosophy to others.
 - e. Goals and dreams for the future in ministry.
 - f. The nature, character, and structure of the church that will complement the philosophy of ministry as articulated.
 - g. Other questions of church policy.
 - h. Any other question in this area.

3. "Understand and communicate the content of the Bible".
 - a. Author, theme and historical situation of each book.
 - b. A general outline of:
 - i. The history of Israel.
 - ii. The life of Christ.
 - iii. The history of the Church from Pentecost to the second coming of Christ.
 - c. General outline of key books of the Bible.
 - i. Genesis
 - ii. Daniel
 - iii. Acts
 - iv. Ephesians
 - v. Revelation
 - vi. other...
 - d. Hermeneutical position.
 - i. Explanation of historical, grammatical, literal, and critical method of interpretation.
 - ii. Explanation of position on Immanency.
 - iii. Explanation of Historical Pre-millennialism, Covenant Theology, Dispensationalism, etc.

4. "Affirm and defend the doctrine of the AGC".
 - a. Explanation and scriptural support for any doctrine in the "Articles of Faith and Doctrine".
 - b. Understanding of complementary doctrines to those published.
 - c. Ability to interact with doctrines in contemporary dispute:
 - i. Inerrancy of Scripture
 - ii. Deity of Christ
 - iii. Extent of the Atonement
 - iv. Security of the Believer
 - v. Gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - vi. Timing of the Rapture
 - d. Other

XIII. FORMAT FOR THE EXAMINATION

A. BEFORE THE EXAMINATION

1. The local church contacts the Chair of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee to request the examination of a candidate.
2. The Chair of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee sets a date with the church and reminds the candidate of the "Contents of the Examination" section in the **MINISTRY HANDBOOK**.
3. The Chair appoints the examining committee consisting of:
 - a. The chair, (normally a member of the Doctrine and Credentials Committee).
 - b. Representatives of the Search Committee or board of the local church, preferably a minimum of four in number.
 - c. Representatives of the Doctrine and Credentials Committee.
 - d. Two other pastors of the AGC from the area.
 - e. The examining chair makes assignments of primary areas of questioning to participants.

B. DURING THE EXAMINATION

1. Leadership - The appointed examination chair leads the meeting at the local church. His responsibility is to state the purpose of the meeting and to guide the discussion so that the candidate is thoroughly examined.
2. Content - The subject matter for the examination questioning is largely taken from the "Contents of the Examination" section of the **MINISTRY HANDBOOK**.
3. Procedure - The questioning for each of the four general areas of content is led by four different members of the examination committee as previously requested by the chair. Their responsibility is to examine the candidate concerning the assigned area. At the conclusion of each area of questioning, other committee members are given the opportunity to question in that same area. Twenty to thirty minutes may be taken on each area. At the conclusion of the examination any area of concern that surfaced may be addressed in questions.
4. Candidate's Response - At the conclusion, the candidate is given an opportunity to ask questions of the local church or AGC representatives.

C. AFTER THE EXAMINATION

1. The candidate is dismissed and the committee evaluates.
2. The evaluation may result in:

- a. Acceptance by the examination committee for induction or ordination.
 - b. Rejection by the examination committee for induction or ordination.
 - c. Special action for further examination. If areas of weakness are discovered, the candidate is given assignments for further examination under the direction of the Doctrine and Credentials Committee.
 - d. When a consensus cannot be reached the matter is referred to the Doctrine and Credentials Committee.
3. After the decision the candidate is informed of the committee decision and/or recommendations.
 4. The examination chair informs the Chair of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee of the results.
 5. The church is advised that the candidate is considered acceptable to be offered a call to ministry.
 6. The details of the Service of Induction and/or Ordination are arranged by the church in consultation with the Regional Superintendent of the AGC. A copy of this letter of request must be sent to the AGC National Office for the immediate processing of all necessary documentation and government registrations.