

Pastoral Ordination Track Process

Southeastern California Conference

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The process of becoming ordained to the Seventh-day Adventist gospel ministry in the Southeastern California Conference is an intentional, participative process typically covering the first 4 to 5 years of your field experience.

During this process, pastoral interns will be exposed to a number of opportunities for learning and internalizing pastoral practices, issues, and philosophies. Though not curriculum driven, it is hoped that a number of specific skills will be acquired and experiences shared which will prove foundational and formational in a beginning pastor's early growth.

Among the major goals of SECC's pre-ordination process:

- To provide an atmosphere and process where a new, developing pastor can forge a personal, biblically-based philosophy of pastoral ministry, and a spiritual life which will provide its energy
- To provide the conference Ministerial Director the opportunity to experientially gain firsthand acquaintance with and knowledge of each new, developing pastor in the conference. Based on this experiential knowledge, the Ministerial Director can bring to bear resources and experiences which may further enable growth and experience in the pastor
- To provide the Ministerial Director the opportunity to gauge when a pastor is ready to be taken through the ordination review process
- To provide preparation for the ordination committee interview
- To provide a safe setting where the pastor can be observed in a collegial situation
- To provide a safe setting where a pastor can share his or her positive or negative experiences, to gain support from other pastors in similar circumstances, and to perhaps learn skills which might be useful in solving ministry challenges
- To build a trusting relationship with the conference Ministerial Director which can function long after a pastor's participation in the ordination process is finished

Most of these goals are addressed through a number of planned interaction settings including 8 to 10 group meetings a year, personal appointments with the Ministerial Director, meetings with your Senior Pastor, and phone conversations.

With rare exception, this pastoral pre-ordination process is available *only* to SECC full-time pastoral employees, and is undertaken with the hoped-for eventual outcome of certification by an ordination committee that you have finished the ordination process successfully, and a recommendation for ordination to the SECC Executive Committee. (Administrators, departmental personnel, or educators who are deemed eligible for ordination will be prepared for ordination under a different policy.)

Important: completion of the process and certification by an ordination committee does not guarantee ordination. Also note that the time required for the ordination process will be longer for those pastors who do not have a masters degree in an area of religion or theology, or for those pastors for whom additional growth experiences are recommended.

What Will the 4 to 5 Year Experience Be Like?

Over the course of your years in this process, you are required to participate in the process as specifically outlined by the Ministerial Director. Specifics may change from year to year to best fit the profile of the pastors in the group at a given time or because of special needs or circumstances.

Some of the areas which will be covered include: interfacing with conference leaders; understanding church structure; family systems implications in ministry; personal and professional boundaries; dealing with senior pastors and local church leaders; church and personal finance; personality implications in pastor/member relationships; philosophy and theology of ministry; ordination issues; conflict issues; idealism in ministry vs. reality in ministry; personal spiritual growth; pastoral family issues; understanding and relating to the Adventist educational system; and much more.

There are several things you will “do” on the road to gaining the skills and experiences hoped for in the process. Because there is a constant influx and outgoing of pastors in this process, we can only chart a general direction which your experience will take. However, you can plan on the following as constants:

Unordained Pastors Meetings

You are required to attend 8 to 10 half-day meetings per year with other unordained pastors in the conference at the SECC office in Riverside. Generally, a noon meal or supper will be provided. Plan on 2 to 4 hours for the meetings themselves, *and plan to protect this appointment.*

These meetings are not optional for pastors on the ordination track. Since one of the goals of the process is to provide adequate exposure of all new pastors to the Ministerial Director (who makes the recommendations to conference administration regarding ordination), *failure to make the appointments for the unordained pastor’s meetings will lengthen the time spent in the process.*

The meetings will be directed toward a spiritual emphasis, topic, a current pastoral or conference situation, or discussion of a theological or philosophical idea which relates to ministry. Occasionally there will be a guest with expertise in an area of ministry. Often we'll simply discuss current challenges or victories being experienced by members of the group.

In addition to the value of the time we in the conference office receive from getting to know each new pastor and observing how you function in a peer group, *you* have the opportunity to gain much from group dynamics if you elect to really participate. The opportunity to have a safe environment to share issues with others experiencing similar things and to build a network of fellow pastors who can be an ongoing source of support and encouragement to you is well worth your personal investment.

Reading List

There are several books which are required reading to be completed over the first four years of experience in the process. At times, we may work our way through a book as a group activity. The reading list currently consists of the following titles with updates at the discretion of the Ministerial Director:

Boundaries, by Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Zondervan
Antagonists in the Church, by Kenneth C. Haugk, Augsburg
Well-Intentioned Dragons, by Marshall Shelly, Leadership Library
Under the Unpredictable Plant, by Eugene Peterson, Zondervan
Generation to Generation, by Edwin Friedman
Personality Plus, by Florence Littauer *OR Please Understand Me* by Kersey
Descending into Greatness, by Bill Hybels

Also, the pastor is expected to maintain a subscription to **Leadership Magazine**.

Certifications

During the process of the four years, the pastor is required to become certified to administer and interpret at least one personality inventory. Taylor-Johnson, 16PF, Myers-Briggs are examples of suitable inventories.

It is highly recommended that you gain certification in administration of the Prepare/Enrich pre-marital testing instrument. Your continuing education funds can be used to pursue any of these certifications.

Clinical Pastoral Education

All SECC ministerial interns are required to complete one quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) during their ordination process. Because of the time commitment and cost involved, you will need to work with the Ministerial Director for funding, and to make arrangements with your church and Senior Pastor to take the course.

Yearly Personal Interview with the Ministerial Director

At least once a year, plan on an appointment with the Ministerial Director. Often this appointment can be over a meal, and often it can take place in the area where you live. During this time you'll have a chance to discuss development issues, personal issues, professional role issues, or anything else which may need to be addressed at that point in your development.

The Ministerial Director will also occasionally confer with your Senior Pastor, and perhaps make an appointment with the both of you if appropriate.

Fourth Year Process Activities

Beginning with your **fourth year** in the process, your name will be reviewed by the conference's standing ordination process review committee. This committee determines who is eligible to proceed to the final stages of the process. They might also recommend additional steps in mentoring, nurturing, or maturing process which should be completed before approval for the final stages of the ordination process.

Prior to this committee's review of your ministry at the beginning of your fourth year, you need to submit a written document 3 to 6 pages in length to answer the following:

- How your experience in ministry so far been similar to or different from your expectations in either positive or negative ways?
- At this point in your ministry, what areas of pastoral work give you the greatest sense of fulfillment?
- What areas of your pastoral work interest you least?
- What areas of growth do you see in yourself and in your ministry which need to be addressed?
- What is your personal theology of pastoral ministry?

- What, if any, additional help might the conference be in providing additional experiences, mentoring, or nurturing which might be helpful to you at this time?

After reviewing your paper, the standing ordination committee may elect to ask for additional work to be done in some area of your pastoral experience before moving on into the final stages of the ordination process.

Final Ordination Stages

Pastors who are approved to move into the final stages of the ordination process will be pastors who...

- Have demonstrated an adequate awareness of their purpose and place in ministry
- Have shown by their work that they are indeed gifted and called to ministry
- Have completed at least four years of field experience (five years without a masters degree in an area of religion or theology)
- Have faithfully participated in the pre-ordination process.

When you reach this point, you will be contacted by the Ministerial Director and given notice of the time frame for the final stages of the process. Specific activities to be completed include:

- An appointment for the Ministerial Director to visit with the local church board to solicit a positive vote of support for your ordination review
- Distribute a brief survey to the local congregation asking for their input (included in this booklet)
- Provide an audio or video tape of a recent sermon
- Complete the bio sheet (included in this booklet)
- Set an appointment for the actual ordination interview. You will be invited to ask one field pastor from our conference to participate on your ordination committee.
- Prepare a 4 to 6-page paper for the interview which will speak to the following:
 1. What is your understanding of the meaning of ordination, and how do you relate to ordination as practiced in the SDA church?

2. What indicators do you observe in yourself which tell you that you are ready to be ordained?
3. What have you observed about yourself and your ministry which makes you sure of your calling to ministry?
4. What have you done to attend to personal and family needs while pastoring? To what indicators can you point that you have a healthy emotional makeup, and that your family and personal life is healthy?
5. How do you see your work as a local pastor in the context of, and in connection with, the local conference and the world church?
6. Revisit once again your personal theology of ministry. How has it changed or grown since first writing about it a year ago?
7. What are your dreams for your life of ministry? What do you envision yourself doing as you progress through your life, and what goals for continued growth have you established for yourself in ministry?

The above items must be submitted to the Ministerial Director's office no later than four weeks prior to your ordination committee interview.

Ordination Review Interview

The culmination of your pre-ordination experience is the interview, at which time you will meet with a group of ministers who will spend about an hour with you. Generally, this group will be composed of conference officers, the Ministerial Director, Ethnic Minority Vice Presidents where appropriate, two local field pastors selected by the Ministerial Director, and a local field pastor selected by you who is ordained or who has completed the ordination process.

During this time, you'll be asked various questions about ministry, many of which will likely cover areas you will have written about in the two papers described above. However, the committee members are free to ask questions in any area of ministry they choose.

At SECC, we look at this part of the process as a joyful confirmation of your ministry experience so far, with the anticipated result that the committee will be able to heartily give their certification that you have successfully completed the pre-ordination process. If this is the case, a recommendation will be voted and sent to the conference Executive Committee for their review and action. If approval is voted there, your name will be sent to the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee. Names approved there will then

be approved for ordination. The Ministerial Director's office will work with you to plan your ordination or commissioning service.

Please note, however, that the committee is fully within its rights and responsibility to recommend to the conference administration or Ministerial Director that more time be taken before giving this certification.

If this is the result of your ordination review committee, specific counsel will be given on areas which need addressing before your next appointment with the committee.

A Final Word

It is the responsibility of the local conference to make a good faith effort to develop and evaluate new pastors as they begin their ministry. However, it is also the intent of the Southeastern California Conference to enable your years as a pastoral intern to be a time for personal, professional, and spiritual growth and learning. We also want to give you the opportunity to forge a sound Biblical theology of ministry which will help serve as a reliable, internal compass throughout your years in professional ministry.

Our prayer is that God will bless our combined efforts to make this a reality.