

# RULES OF CONFERENCE

## 801. Ministerial Credentialing

### 801.1. Ministerial Development Community

801.1.1. There shall be a Ministerial Development Community system that is composed of the Bishop, the Ministerial Development Associate and appointed members to carry out the credentialing tasks among individuals holding any of the following classifications or statuses in the districts of the National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

801.1.1.1. The Ministerial Development Community will deliver an integrated process for credentialing that includes 1) helping sponsoring pastors and churches identify and prepare candidates for assessment, 2) conducting a Pastoral Assessment Center, 3) examination of applicants through a Board of Examiners, 4) coaching, supporting, and training opportunities, 5) facilitating a process for lifelong learning, and 6) providing pastoral care, health and restoration.

801.1.1.2. The Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate will appoint members to fill the component areas of the Pastoral Assessment Center, Board of Examiners, Coaching, and the Pastoral Care and Restoration Teams with members from among all regions of the National Conference.

801.1.1.2.1. The Pastoral Assessment Center: The Bishop, Ministerial Development Associate, and Director of the Pastoral Assessment Center will appoint members to participate as assessors and presenters for the Pastoral Assessment Center.

801.1.1.2.2. The Board of Examiners: The Bishop, Ministerial Development Associate, and Chairman of the Board of Examiners (Itinerancy and Non-Itinerancy) teams will appoint members to interview and examine pastoral applicants for ministry in the Evangelical Congregational Church.

801.1.1.2.3. Coaching: The Bishop, Ministerial Development Associate, and Coaching Associate will appoint members to receive training for effective coaching of all non-elder pastoral credentialed individuals.

801.1.1.2.4. Pastoral Care Team: The Bishop, Ministerial Development Associate, and Chairman of the Pastoral Care Team will appoint members to assist in the overall aspects of pastoral care and health.

801.1.1.2.5. Pastoral Restoration Team: The Bishop, Ministerial Development Associate, and Chairman of the Pastoral Care Team will appoint members to oversee the restoration process for pastors and their families during pastoral accountability, disciplinary care, and suspension (see Section 808).

801.1.1.3. The component areas of the Ministerial Development Community shall meet in frequency and at various times that will most effectively accomplish the overall objectives of the community.

801.1.2. The Ministerial Development Community National Conference Relations Committee shall meet together at least annually to evaluate current practices, review consistency, and formulate procedures.

801.1.3. The Ministerial Development Community shall meet together at least annually to evaluate current practices, review consistency, and formulate procedures.

---

## 801.4. Authorizations

801.4.1. The Ministerial Development Community shall report and be authorized to recommend for approval at National Conference, or grant immediately in the case of an Approved Candidate see (801.6.1.1) 1) candidates, pastors, and elders within provisional, local, and national classifications, 2) lay preachers and deacon/esses within specialized classifications, and 3) elders and deacon/esses for ordination, and 4) elders for itinerancy.

801.4.1.1. Approved candidates can immediately apply for and receive denominational student aid.

801.4.2. The Ministerial Development Community shall report and be authorized to recommend for approval at National Conference retirement for local pastors and elders, and superannuated or supernumerary status for ordained elders under the region's jurisdiction.

801.4.3. Regional Conference Relations Committees shall be authorized to transfer between candidate and pastor statuses within a given classification without reporting to the National Conference. The Ministerial Development Community shall report and be authorized to recommend transfer for all others.

801.4.4. The Ministerial Development Community is authorized to grant provisional classifications upon pastors and elders between the sessions of National Conference for the purpose of providing availability for stationing needs.

801.4.5. The ~~Conference Network Team~~ Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate are authorized to ~~provide~~ recommend spiritual care for candidates, pastors, elders, lay preachers, or deacon/esses needing guidance or support.

801.4.6. The ~~Conference Network Team~~ Ministerial Development Associate in consultation with the Bishop is authorized to ~~recommend~~ for discipline any candidate, pastor, elder, lay preacher, or deacon/ess in order to provide spiritual restoration ~~under the region's jurisdiction~~ (see 808).

801.4.7. The ~~Ministerial Development Community~~ Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate in consultation with the Board of Examiners are authorized to recommend to the National Conference the removal from the rolls of any candidate, lay preacher, or licensed deacon/ess who does not complete and submit the form for annual renewal of credentials in a given year.

801.4.8. The ~~Ministerial Development Community~~ Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate in consultation with the Board of Examiners are authorized to recommend to the National Conference the removal from the rolls any pastor or elder who has withdrawn irregularly from assignment before the conclusion of the conference year, unless an agreement has been negotiated with the Stationing Committee concerning an early release. All such removals would be reported to the National Conference.

801.4.9. The ~~Conference Network Team~~ Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate in consultation with the Board of Examiners are authorized to take disciplinary action when any credentialed person fails to notify them of changes in ministry employment outside of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

801.4.10. The Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate, acting jointly or individually, are authorized to immediately suspend the credentials of any individual when in their judgment credible evidence exists that the individual has violated Biblical standards of conduct to the extent that the individual in question cannot continue in pastoral ministry (see 808.3).

801.4.11. The ~~Conference Network Team~~ Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate in consultation with the Board of Examiners may authorize the Ministerial Development Community to bring a recommendation to the National Conference to revoke an individual's credentials and remove them from our ministerial roles. (See 808.4)

---

805.2.3.5 Local and licensed pastors are permitted voting privileges at National Conference ~~only after three (3) years of continuous service has been completed and thereafter~~ whenever they are assigned (see 205.1). ~~A full year of service in a part-time assignment shall be counted as one-half (1/2) year of service (see 906.2).~~

---

## **808. Credentials and the Process for Violations of Biblical Standards**

808.1. When a credentialed individual is alleged to have committed a sin expressly forbidden in God's Word or to have acted in a manner that is detrimental to the people entrusted to his/her care, the Evangelical Congregational Church, or the ministry of the Kingdom, the Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate shall meet with the credentialed individual, and any other parties involved in order to discern the reality and seriousness of the situation.

808.1.1. The Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate, acting jointly, or individually in the other's absence, have the authority to act immediately to suspend the credentials of any individual when in their judgment credible evidence exists that the individual has violated biblical standards of conduct to the extent that the individual in question cannot continue in ministry effective immediately. (See 808.2)

808.1.2. Alternatively, the Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate, may determine that the individual can continue in ministry under the direction of a restoration team that will be assigned to walk through a process of healing with the individual that may also include the spouse and family, if necessary. This

process will be defined as Under Accountability or Under Discipline based on the seriousness of the violation. (See 808.4)

## **808.2. Violations Resulting in the Immediate Suspension of Credentials**

808.2.1. There are times when an individual holding credentials is removed from his/her ministry position, because the individual has violated biblical standards of conduct to the extent that the individual in question cannot immediately continue in ministry.

808.2.1.1. The Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate along with the appropriate Board of Examiners shall then meet as soon as is practical to consider further action, and the appropriate District Field Director will be notified.

808.2.1.2. As a result of suspension, the credentialed individual will be immediately removed from his/her ministry position(s), and after review of the Board of Examiners, may be placed under disciplinary care (See 808.4.2), and may additionally, be required to surrender his/her credentials. (See 808.3)

808.2.1.3. Neither this designation, nor its results, will appear in the Conference Journal.

## **808.3. Violations Resulting in Surrendering of Credentials**

808.3.1. There are times when an individual holding credentials is removed from a ministry position, because the individual has violated biblical standards of conduct to the extent that the individual in question cannot continue in ministry for a prolonged duration.

808.3.1.1. At this point, the Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate along with the appropriate Board of Examiners have the authority to ask individuals to surrender their credentials. The appropriate District Field Director will be notified.

808.3.1.2. As a result of surrendering credentials, the individual will be immediately removed from his/her ministry position(s), and required to surrender his/her clergy certificate and identification card. The term for one's return to ministry will be determined by a process under the direction of a restoration team that will be assigned to walk through a process of healing with the individual that may also include the spouse and family, if necessary. (See 808.4.2)

808.3.1.3. When an individual refuses to submit to the process for restoration, the Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate will follow procedures to revoke his/her credentials. (See 808.5)

808.3.1.4. Neither this designation, nor its results, will appear in the Conference Journal.

## **808.4. Violations Not Resulting in Surrender of Credentials**

### **808.4.1. Under Accountability**

808.4.1.1. There are times when an individual holding credentials is not removed from his/her ministry position, but is dealing with issues where the guidance of the ~~Conference Network Team Pastoral Restoration Team~~ may be of great help.

808.4.1.2. In those cases, the ~~Conference Network Team Ministerial Development Associate and Bishop~~ may at their discretion ~~and in consultation with the Ministerial Development Associate and Bishop~~, place individuals Under Accountability ~~to the Conference Network Team~~ and assign a ~~Committee of Concern Pastoral Restoration Team~~ to provide accountability, guidance, and support to them. The appropriate District Field Director will be notified, and no action is taken in regard to the credential.

808.4.1.2.1. The members of the ~~Committee of Concern Pastoral Restoration Team~~ are accountable to the ~~Conference Network Team Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate~~ at all times and can never act independently of their oversight.

808.4.1.2.2. The work of the ~~Committee of Concern Pastoral Restoration Team~~ will be governed by the ~~Conference Network Team Ministerial Development Community~~ policy.

808.4.1.3. There is no change in credential or in status of an individual who is Under Accountability.

808.4.1.4. ~~Neither this designation, nor its results, will appear in the Conference Journal.~~

### **808.4.2. Under Disciplinary Care**

808.4.2.1. ~~Any~~ There are times when an individual holding credentials is removed from his/her ~~activity~~ ministry position because of sinful conduct and is placed under the disciplinary care of the ~~Conference Network Team Pastoral Restoration Team~~ (801.1.1.2.5).

- ~~The Conference Network Team will assign a Committee of Concern to work toward spiritual restoration with at least one (1) member of the Conference Network Team involved.~~
- 808.4.2.2. The Pastoral Restoration Team will work toward spiritual restoration of the individual (including the family, if necessary), in consultation with the Bishop, the Ministerial Development Associate. The appropriate District Field Director will be notified.
- 808.4.2.2.1. If needed, the Ministerial Development Associate and/or Bishop may additionally ask the individual to surrender his/her credentials and authorize the Board of Examiners to hold them until such time as restorative requirements are met. (See 808.3)
- 808.4.2.3. The members of the Pastoral Restoration Team are accountable to the Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate at all times and can never act independently of their oversight.
- 808.4.2.4. The work of the ~~Committee of Concern~~ Pastoral Restoration Team will be governed by the ~~Conference Network Team~~ Ministerial Development Community policy.
- ~~If needed, the Conference Network Team may authorize the Ministerial Development Community to hold the individual's credentials.~~
- 808.4.2.5. Neither this designation, nor its results, will appear in the Conference Journal.

#### **~~Under Suspension~~**

- ~~808.3.1. The Bishop and Ministerial Development Associate, acting jointly or individually, have the authority to act immediately to suspend the credentials of any individual when in their judgment credible evidence exists that the individual has violated biblical standards of conduct to the extent that the individual in question cannot continue in pastoral ministry.~~
- ~~808.3.2. The Conference Network Team shall then meet as soon as is practical to consider further action.~~
- ~~808.3.3. Neither this designation, nor its results, will appear in the Conference Journal.~~

#### **808.5. Violations Resulting in Revoking of Credentials**

- 808.5.1. In situations where the fact of misconduct is beyond question and the ~~Conference Network Team~~ Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate determines that an individual under accountability, disciplinary care, or suspension cannot be restored to office or fails to complete the requirements established for restoration, the ~~Conference Network Team~~ Bishop and the Ministerial Development Associate may authorize the ~~Ministerial Development Community~~ appropriate Board of Examiners to bring a recommendation to the National Conference to revoke the individual's credentials and remove them from our ministerial rolls.
- 808.5.1.1. Voting by ballot, a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Itinerancy is required to approve the action.
- 808.5.1.2. The individual whose credentials are being revoked may appeal the decision utilizing the appeal procedure outlined in the Discipline, paragraph 614.

**Rev. Jeffrey Byerly**  
**Ministerial Development Associate**