

# Colorado District Board of Ministry

## The Credential Process: Roles and Responsibilities

**Statement of Purpose:** As a board, it is our desire to operate under a set of overarching principles that supersede mere historical practices and local policies. It is our desire to follow the precepts demonstrated in Scripture, and to honor the responsibilities assigned by the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene.

Considering the statement above, it seems prudent to evaluate three categories for each of the parties involved in the credentialing process: responsibility, capacity, and authority. These categories apply in many contexts but will only be evaluated as they relate to the process of credentialing.

### The Candidate

**Responsibility:** Once a candidate has accepted God's call to ministry, and been affirmed by the local church, they carry the full weight of responsibility to prepare educationally, by way of experience, and in the development of gifts and graces (2 Tim. 2:15 and 4:2; Manual par. 531, 531.4). At times, some will need additional support to become fully prepared for vocational ministry. It is the responsibility of the candidate to know the orthodox theology of the church universal, and the distinctive theology of the Church of the Nazarene (2 Timothy 2:2 & 2:15).

**Capacity:** Each person has the capacity to pursue the areas of preparation for ministry. Degrees of success in each area will vary from person-to-person. Candidates also have the capacity to pursue mentors, advisors, and those who can help in areas where growth has not been achieved through prior experience.

**Authority:** As is normative of a credentialing process in most disciplines, the candidate is not in a position of authority.

### The Educational Provider

**Responsibility:** Each provider has the responsibility to deliver course content in keeping with the requirements of their accrediting/validating agency. If providing a full program for ordination, they have the responsibility of having their program validated by the Regional Course of Study Advisory Committee (RCOSAC).

**Capacity:** Providers have the capacity to provide documentation of academic progress and RCOSAC validation if applicable, which may demonstrate completion of the minimum educational requirements for ordination. They do not have the capacity to determine if a candidate has satisfied all educational requirements of a specific district. Some districts have educational requirements beyond the minimum denominational requirements.

**Authority:** As is normative of a credentialing process in most disciplines, the educational provider is not in a position of authority.

## **The Local Pastor**

**Responsibility:** The local church pastor has a responsibility to be the primary mentor to a candidate. The *Manual* says it this way: “Nurture the call people feel toward Christian ministry and mentor such persons, guiding them toward appropriate preparation for ministry. (par. 515.10). Although the candidate holds primary responsibility, this requires the local pastor be familiar with, and oversee, the entire preparation process for candidates. It is an opportunity to live out the Paul/Timothy model (1 Timothy 1:2). Leadership comes with the responsibility of equipping the saints for service (Eph. 4:11-13). It is the responsibility of the pastor to ensure the candidate knows the orthodox theology of the church universal, and the distinctive theology of the Church of the Nazarene prior to recommending them for a district license.

**Capacity:** The pastor has the capacity to mentor candidates in the local setting. There is also the capacity to structure a local interview process that prepares the candidate well for what they will experience at the district level. The local pastor may also identify areas where a candidate needs additional help and recommend persons and/or resources to assist in these areas.

**Authority:** The pastor has the authority to speak into the life of a candidate under their care, just as Paul did with Timothy, devoting two books of the New Testament to this process. The pastor is also the one with authority to nominate the local candidate to the church board for a local license and the recommendation of a district license (Manual par. 129.12, 531-531.3, 532.3).

## **The Local Church**

**Responsibility:** The local church and pastor have a responsibility to recognize those divinely called and to endorse and assist the individual’s entry into a lifetime of ministry. (Manual par. 500, 502.5). When recognizing such a candidate by granting a local license, the church has the responsibility to notify the district office of such action so the required verification of credential history can be conducted. The church also has the responsibility of securing a criminal background check prior to issuing a local license. (Manual par. 531.1). There is a shared responsibility with the board of ministry to determine whether a candidate is called of God for vocational ministry (1 Kings 12:31 and 13:33-34).

**Capacity:** While the local church does not have the capacity to serve as a validated educational provider, it does have the capacity to mentor and nurture those working through the educational and credentialing process (Manual par. 502.5). There must also be an evaluation of the candidate regarding gifts and graces for ministry (Manual par. 502.6).

**Authority:** The local church has the authority to grant a local minister’s license. (Manual par. 129.12, 531-531.3). The local church may also recommend a candidate to the district board and district assembly for a district minister’s license (Manual par. 129.14). A candidate should be reviewed for eligibility and readiness prior to being recommended to the district board; **a recommendation is an endorsement.**

## **The District Board**

**Responsibility:** There is a shared responsibility with the local church to determine whether a candidate is called of God for vocational ministry (1 Kings 12:31 and 13:33-34) The responsibilities of the board are listed in Manual paragraphs 231-234.4. Below is a summary of salient duties:

- Examine and evaluate... (Manual par. 231.1)
- To carefully inquire of each candidate... (Manual par. 231.3)
- To carefully investigate the conduct of each candidate... (Manual par. 231.4)

There must also be an evaluation of the candidate regarding gifts and graces for ministry (Manual par. 502.6)

**Capacity:** While the board has the responsibility to assess and evaluate, its capacity to train and educate is limited by the amount of time it spends with candidates each year. There is certainly a capacity to encourage and nurture a call that is evident in the life of a candidate. The board also has the capacity to provide additional resources and recommendations to help a candidate grow in their response to God's call (see also candidate section on capacity).

**Authority:** The district board has the authority to recommend to the district assembly the granting of a district license, and to recommend a candidate for ordination (Manual par. 231.1). It also has the authority to determine when a candidate has met the minimum requirements for ordination in all areas. Final determination regarding ordination rests with the Jurisdictional General Superintendent (Manual par. 307.4).

## **The Ordination Mentor**

**Responsibility:** The Ordination Mentor is tasked with nurturing the spiritual and theological development of the candidate. They are asked to meet at least six times during the year prior to the candidate's potential ordination; monthly is ideal. These meetings should assess the candidate's worthiness (Ephesians 4:1) and readiness for ordination. Topics of discussion should include theology, stewardship, alignment with the Church of the Nazarene in all areas (covenants, Articles of Faith, polity, etc.), family life, personal spiritual development, professional development, etc. Mentoring should be a comprehensive process. Finally, the mentor is tasked with making a final recommendation to the Board of Ministry regarding the readiness for ordination of the candidate. This recommendation should be presented in person when possible.

**Capacity:** The local church pastor generally does not serve as the ordination mentor to candidates from their own church. The goal of mentoring is to have an additional voice to speak into the life of the candidate. The mentor has the capacity of collaboration/partnership with the local pastor. Together they can better inform the mentoring process. The mentor may also identify areas where a candidate needs additional help and recommend persons and/or resources to assist in these areas.

**Authority:** While the mentor does not have formal authority in this process, **their recommendation to the Board of Ministry will carry significant weight** and will help inform the eventual disposition of the candidate by the board regarding ordination.

**Ideas to Assist Candidates and Local Pastors in the Process:**

Additional things we CAN do

- Produce and distribute interview guides
- Produce and make accessible a video library of excellent interviews
- Regularly distribute our Articles of Faith, Core Values, Mission Statement, and Agreed Statement of Belief through email and social media
- Provide an approved mentor for the year(s) leading up to ordination
- Offer process coaching and resourcing to the local pastor