

# **Ordination and Credentials**

## **Alliance International Ministries**

One of the key foundations for our Alliance is a passion for relationships. In our desire to encourage and serve those with whom we have relationship, we want to recognize the call of God on their lives. Furthermore, we recognize that many of the individuals whom we serve need ministerial credentials and/or ordination. What follows is our theology and practice regarding this issue.

### **A New Testament Basis**

It was Christ Himself who called persons into ministry, giving them both direction for service and power for serving. It was He who initiated the relationship and He who issued the invitation. In addition, it was He who determined the specific calling or task. Jesus appointed the worker to a particular work and provided specific directions for the accomplishment of that ministry.

Simon and Andrew were working at their nets. Jesus chose them, called them forth, and uttered His directive, "I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1: 17). Notice that there were several ingredients in this process:

1. There was a personal invitation from Jesus Christ Himself. He initiated a personal relationship and issued a personal calling.
2. The calling required a sacrifice. The disciples were required to leave their nets if they were to accept His call. Their old way of life would cease. They were accepting a new life's direction and identity.
3. The Lord offered a divine directive. Their job description was outlined. In this case, they were to be "fishers of men." However, this was not the end of the "call process." We see that the Lord not only offered the disciples a task to accomplish, but in the process, conferred upon them the authority needed to fulfill it. They were given authority (see Matthew 10: 1-15 and Luke 10: 1-16) to exorcise demons, preach and teach the Gospel, and miraculously heal the sick. Finally, He baptized them with His own Spirit in order that they might be fully equipped to fulfill their calling. Therefore, we include an additional ingredient:
4. Those whom Jesus called, He also empowered. They were enabled to be His ambassadors with His authority and power. For, Jesus sent them saying, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me" (Luke 10: 16).

## **An Apostolic Pattern**

The disciples of Jesus closely adhered to the pattern of ministry that Jesus had given to them. They continued to perform the ministerial acts of Jesus: breaking bread in His remembrance (Holy Communion), baptizing in the divine Name, preaching and teaching the Gospel message, praying and worshipping both personally and corporately, and ministering to the sick and demon possessed. In addition, they ministered "the promise of the Father," the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Finally, they followed His pattern of calling and authorizing disciples for specific acts of service in the Kingdom.

The "call of Jesus" was a process that included several ingredients. The apostolic community followed the same pattern as they called persons into the service of the Kingdom. 1) They looked for those persons who already demonstrated God's gifts and calling on their lives. 2) The apostles recognized and certified God's selection by issuing a call to sacrificial living and 3) specific service. 4) They prayed and laid hands upon those selected in order that they would receive an impartation of power for the fulfillment of their calling.

There are biblical precedents for such a spiritual impartation even before the time of the apostles. The Lord directed Moses to,

Take Joshua the son of Nun, man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him...Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses. (Number 27: 18-20, 23)

Through the laying on of hands, God imparted power and authority to Joshua. He was given a commission or charge of duty. With it came both public recognition of God's calling and impartation of grace to fulfill it.

The apostles recognized the divine calling resident on the lives of the first deacons. After prayer, they laid their hands upon them and authorized them for their ministry. Barnabas and Paul called elders (presbyteroi) to care for the congregations that they had established (Acts. 14: 23). They prayed, fasted, and commended them to the Lord. It is presumable that their "commendation" included a recognition of God's calling, a charge to sacrificial and specific service, and an impartation of grace for its accomplishment. Correspondingly, Paul reminds Timothy of the impartation of a gift of God that was given to him by the laying on of the elders' hands (I Timothy 4: 14). Paul further admonishes Timothy not to lay hands upon anyone too hastily.

It is evident that the apostolic community recognized a variety of gifts, ministries, and offices: prophets, evangelists, and teachers are among those listed. Those having direct responsibility for the care of congregations were: apostles (apostoloi), elders (presbyteroi), and overseers (episcopoi). Each of these persons in authority was accorded special recognition. As Paul writes, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate

those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction" (I Thessalonians 5: 12). Consecration and commission of these persons was accomplished through a sacred service of recognition and impartation, which we call ordination.

## **AIM Ordination**

Alliance International Ministries seeks to follow the pattern of ordination to ministry left to the Church by the Lord and His apostles. In following their ministerial example, AIM recognizes the importance and validity of ordination. This distinctive and consecratory act serves to accomplish several purposes:

- Ordination is a recognition of God's general call to ministry in a person's life. God has bestowed a ministerial gift on an individual and this act makes public recognition of God's choice and blessing.
- Ordination is a recognition of the unique nature of this person's calling. God's call includes a divine directive for the fulfillment of a specific purpose in the Kingdom of God.
- Ordination signifies that the individual is now ready for the task or office of specific ministry.
- Christ has given gifts to His Church, which include the offices of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher. AIM ordains persons into these offices. At the same time, AIM stands with the local church in their authority to ordain their own elders, deacons, and other ministers.
- Ordination is viewed as a "setting in" to a specific task or office of ministry. As such, it includes a charge to the individual and an acceptance of that charge by solemn pledge before God.
- Ordination includes the laying on of hands through which a spiritual gift of power and blessing is imparted.
- Ordination is an act of the Church that releases authority to the ordained to rightfully discharge and fulfill an office.

## **Is Re-Ordination Necessary?**

One may ask, "Is there a need to be re-ordained?" No, there is no need to be re-ordained. That would imply that the first ordination was defective or was in some way temporary or insufficient. Ordination is a recognition of God's calling and an impartation of spiritual blessing and power to fulfill that task or office. These gifts from God are without repentance. Even though a minister may move from one place to another or from one

call to another, he does not lose the gifts and authority that God has given to him through ordination.

Having said that, there is one important clarification that must be made. Because ordination is a call to a specific service, if one's task or office should change, it may be appropriate to receive a second ordination. In so doing, the first would not be seen as invalid. However, public recognition of a new office and sacred impartation for its fulfillment would be given. An example may be that of a prophet moving to the office of pastor, or a pastor being called to serve the Kingdom as an apostle.

## **Are Credentials and Ordination the Same Thing?**

One may ask, "If I have been ordained, does that mean that I have credentials?" No, these are two separate items. Ordination is a sacred act. It is a proclamation to the heavenlies and the Church. Credentials, on the other hand, are written documents authorizing a person to exercise spiritual authority. These documents are often required by the secular world for verification of ministerial authority.

## **The Value of AIM Credentials**

AIM Credentials serve a variety of purposes:

- They demonstrate that an individual has common values and vision with AIM team members.
- They provide written validation in both the sacred and secular arenas that an individual's calling is recognized by AIM.
- They provide an individual with the assurance that his ministry has been recognized and his ministerial identity has been affirmed.
- They provide the authority required by some states to perform certain ministerial functions.

## **Procedure for Ordination and Credentials**

### **Track One: AIM's Longstanding Ministerial Relationships**

Jointly, AIM team members have over 100 years of ministerial experience. God has used this time to build many longstanding personal and professional relationships. AIM is prepared to selectively offer immediate ordination and credentials to certain individuals on the basis of our personal knowledge of them. Their approval without delay is the result of longstanding relationship, mutual respect, and ministerial productivity. Those who find themselves in this category and who desire ordination, or credentials, or both, should follow the steps below:

1. Submit your request to an AIM team member who will serve as your sponsor. The team member will recommend you by reviewing your ministerial history and fruitfulness with the other AIM members.
2. Review and agree with the doctrinal statement contained in the AIM by-laws.
3. Determine if you would like to request an on-going plan for ministerial support and development.
4. Schedule with your sponsor a date and time for your ordination service, and/or receipt of credentials.

### **Track Two: AIM's Currently Developing Ministerial Relationships**

AIM provides an opportunity for relationship and fellowship with persons who are currently serving in ministerial capacities. Though we may not have intimate and immediate knowledge of their ministry, we remain open to building a caring relationship with them. If necessary, we will provide them with credentials, as well as professional stimulation and support. Those who find themselves in this category should follow the steps below:

1. Submit your request to an AIM team member who will serve as your sponsor. The team member will recommend you by reviewing your ministerial history and fruitfulness with the other AIM members.
2. Review and agree with the doctrinal statement contained in the AIM by-laws.
3. Determine if you would like to request an on-going plan for ministerial development and continuing education.
4. Schedule with your sponsor a date and time for your receipt of credentials.

### **Track Three: AIM's Mentoring Relationships**

AIM continues to build personal mentoring relationships for the furtherance of the Gospel. Each member of AIM is involved in raising up persons of excellence into positions of ministry and service in the Kingdom of God. AIM is prepared to offer ordination and credentials to men in this category. Those interested should follow the steps listed below:

1. Establish a relationship with one of the AIM team members (sponsor) over an extended period of time.
2. your gifts and calling through personal inventory and assessment with your sponsor.

3. Determine a prescribed course of professional preparation, which will include four areas of ministerial formation: theological education, spiritual discipline, character development, and practical experience.
4. Attend AIM's national or international conferences, attend AIM Leadership Summits, and join the AIM Ministerial Fellowship.
5. Receive recommendation from your sponsor to receive ordination and credentials. Ordination will take place at one of AIM's Leadership Summits. Installation may be scheduled in your local church in conjunction with your sponsor's schedule.

## **Collegial Ministry**

We believe that the best pattern for church life is found in collegial ministry. Team ministry is a biblical model based not upon hierarchical position but upon personal relationships, mutual respect, and God-given gifts. AIM purposefully encourages those whom we ordain and/or credential to follow this pattern of ministry in their sphere of influence.

The Lord Jesus directed His disciples to work together. When Jesus sent the twelve and again the seventy, they ministered in pairs. This pattern continued throughout the Acts of the Apostles as Peter and John traveled from Jerusalem to Samaria in Acts 8, and Barnabas and Saul began Gentile missionary work in Acts 13.

The ministry of elders (prebyteroi) is conspicuously collegial. In fact, the word "elders" (in the plural) appears no less than 18 times in the Acts of Apostles. We find Paul and Barnabas ordaining a body of elders for the care of each congregation that they establish (Acts 14:23). Together, this group of ministers is to govern and care for the flock.

Furthermore, biblical evidence suggests that apostolic ministry is almost always a team effort. Not only does Barnabas travel with Timothy and Paul with Silas, but Paul's communications are: with Silvanus and Timothy to the Thessalonians; with Timothy to the Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and II Corinthians; and with Sosthenes as he writes his first letter to the Corinthians.

Though it may be argued that there appears to be a slight shift of polity when in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7 the congregational overseer (episkopos) is described in the singular, while the elders (presbyteroi) are addressed in the plural (I Timothy 5: 1; 17, 19; Titus 5:2), one should not think this a departure from previous biblical convention nor support for solitary or hierarchical leadership. A proper understanding would be that among the group of ordained elders there is one who displays a gift to be presider and coordinator. This one may rightly be called "first among equals."

## **Credential Procedures**

AIM credentials are annually renewable each January. Renewal is based upon your continued relationship with AIM team members. A \$25 fee is required for renewal in order to offset the cost of office expenses associated with credentials.

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