



FOREST LAKES DISTRICT

EFCA

PO BOX 207, COTTAGE GROVE, WI 53527

Ordination Service Materials

Ordination in the Evangelical Free Church of America

The following are four key reasons we ordain leaders in the EFCA:

- **Affirm** God's call upon a person's life
- **Verify** that this person meets the qualifications and standards for ministry in the Evangelical Free Church of America
- **Approve** this person for ministerial service under the auspices of the EFCA
- **Provide** legal status in the exercise of that person's ministry

In 1990 the EFCA Conference defined ordination in the EFCA in the following way:

“Ordination in The Evangelical Free Church of America is the act of publicly setting a person apart for Christian ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands by others in ministry and the leadership of the local church; thus recognizing God’s call upon his life; his gifts and training for ministry; his commitment to teach and preach the sacred Scriptures.”

The Concept and Scope of Ministry in Scripture

Scripture clearly teaches that each believer has been given a “gift” or “grace” in order to serve our Lord and His Church (Eph. 4:7). In addition, however, some believers have received the call of God upon their lives for vocational ministry and have been given ministry gifts commensurate with the task of preparing God's people to carry out the works of service which build up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11,12). It is this group which God Himself has chosen and appointed and which the Church seeks to recognize by the act of the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3, 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6). The following passages reflect the practice of leaders being commended to churches for their service of leadership (Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:18; Phil. 2:22; 3 John 3,12; etc.).

Certificate of Ordination (COO) Overview

This specific credential is designed for qualified males who serve in pastoral ministry in the local church, whose primary ministry responsibility is preaching and teaching the Word (e.g., senior pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, children's pastors, pastors of music/worship, etc.). There are others also eligible to pursue a COO if they are engaged in certain vocational ministries outside the local church: seminary professors, chaplains, church planters, missionaries [church planters or teachers], institutional ministries, etc.

- 1. Requirements for Certificate of Ordination:** This credential may be issued to male candidates who:
 - Are involved in local church ministry, with some exceptions
 - Have been called and gifted for ministry, which has been recognized and affirmed by the local church
 - Are within three or more years of having been granted a Ministry License
 - Have attained the level of theological proficiency, whether through formal or non-formal means
 - Have been approved by a District Board of Ministerial Standing (DBOMS) and the national Board of Ministerial Standing (BOMS)
 - Have been publicly and corporately recognized in a church service in which the service consists of laying on of hands and praying over by the leadership of the local church. The District Superintendent or a district representative should also be present as the credential is presented to the candidate.
- 2. Preparation for Ordination:** The candidate for this credential must have a Ministry License and be within the third year of ministry after obtaining it, or anytime thereafter.
- 3. Tenure of Ordination:** The Certificate of Ordination is the bestowal of a trust upon those who are called by God to public ministry. This trust remains with the person as long as he continues in ministry and fulfills the standards of ministry as outlined in the pertinent sections above.

If a person leaves an EFCA ministry or an EFC church and transitions into a non-EFCA ministry, the person may retain the EFCA credential.

Should the person leave vocational ministry or cease to be a member in good standing of an EFC church, the certificate must be placed in trust with the EFCA Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing (representing the Office of the President). Should this person re-enter the ministry at a later date, BOMS may request re-examination before returning the credential.

Planning an Ordination Service

The ordination service is a sacred and yet joyful experience both for the one being ordained and for the congregation. As you prepare, be sure to announce the service to the congregation a week or two before the service date. This will allow and encourage them to attend and prayerfully support this very special occasion.

1. There is flexibility when it comes to the overall format and participants involved.
2. When it comes to participants involved in the ceremonial aspect of the service, it is customary to invite a representative from the district, one or two nearby Free Church pastors, a personal friend or mentor, as well as the elders (or equivalent leaders) from the congregation.* If the district superintendent cannot be present, he can send a letter to the church or candidate, expressing his greetings and best wishes. This letter can be read, if so desired, at the service.
3. You are encouraged to include songs or hymns that refer to the church, servanthood, or consecration.
4. It is not recommended that an *unordained* pastor participate in giving either of the charges or the presentation of the certificate.
5. The laying on of hands with prayer should include church leaders and the district representative(s). A personal friend or mentor from another denomination is also welcome to participate in this part of the service. The ordinand's wife may be honored, too, perhaps through a separate prayer, but it should be clear to all that it is an individual, not a couple, who is being ordained.
6. The presentation of the ordination certificate should be done by the district superintendent, his representative, or another EFCA-ordained pastor. If the local church leaders wish to present the certificate, at least include an EFCA-ordained pastor in the presentation to represent the wider family of Free Churches. The credential represents the commendation of three spheres of fellowship: local church, district, and national.
7. It is customary for the congregation to honor the ordinand with a fellowship/refreshment time following the ordination service.

* The EFCA credentialing policy reads that for ordination, candidates should: "have been publicly and corporately recognized in a church service, in which the service consists of laying on of hands and praying over by the leadership of the local church and the District Superintendent or representative as the credential is presented to the candidate. The leadership of the Forest Lakes District may be the District Superintendent, another FLD staff person, or an FLD pastor who is involved in district ministry or is designated by the Superintendent.

Checklist for an Ordination Service

- ❑ Think through your understanding of ordination—your theology of ordination—and how that might affect the shaping of the service.

- ❑ Decide on the time for your service:

Holding it as part of a regular Sunday-morning service has the advantage of having more people present, but it greatly limits the availability of neighboring pastors.

A Sunday afternoon service is very common followed by light refreshments (e.g., cake and coffee).

A Sunday evening service is also common, generally followed by light refreshments.

- ❑ Arrange a date on the church calendar.
- ❑ Invite the church and other guests. Be sure the elders of the church (or their equivalent) and any other pastoral staff are planning to attend.
- ❑ Plan the various parts of the service (music, Scripture reading, etc.). Assign various aspects of the service to various guests as you wish (e.g., the charge to the candidate can be assigned to a mentor in ministry). Give some thought to your response to the charge that will be given to you
- ❑ Arrange for the logistical aspects of the service:

The program/order of service (if you wish, this can include introductions of special guests and a biographical sketch of yourself)

Opening and closing of the church (if the service is in the afternoon or evening)

Lighting and sound

Refreshments afterwards (or potluck before)

Etc.

- ❑ Secure the Certificate of Ordination (our office will send this to you) and the signatures needed on it.

The Church's Part in an Ordination Service

To the Ordination Candidate: This document can be given to the church's governing board, administrative team, etc. as a guide to planning for your upcoming ordination service.

To the Church: While an ordination service can be quite flexible in its format, typical participation and preparations by the local church include the following:

- ❑ Pastoral staff members (some or all, depending on the size of the staff) and elders (or their equivalent) generally have some participation in the service, especially the prayer with laying on of hands.
- ❑ The service is usually held at the candidate's church building, with the church providing for opening/closing, lighting, sound, etc.
- ❑ The whole church is invited and encouraged to be present at the service.
- ❑ Worship leaders are encouraged to assist with the musical parts of the service.
- ❑ The church administrator(s) should help prepare the printed order of service for the occasion.
- ❑ The church should provide for a time of light refreshments after the service (e.g., coffee and cake). Sometimes, but less commonly, the ordination service is scheduled to follow the Sunday morning service with a potluck in between.
- ❑ It is a common practice for the church to collect an offering for the ordinand (for the purchase of books or software for his library, for example), or to present him with an actual gift appropriate to his ministry.

Sample Outline of an Ordination Service

Note: the format of an ordination service is flexible. Consider the following format for suggestions in planning your own. In any case, the italicized items should be included in your service.

Welcome	Lead Elder of the church
Song or Special Music	Candidate's choice
<i>Ordination Described</i>	<i>Meaning and purpose of ordination by District Representative</i>
Scripture Reading/Prayer	
Worship	
Charge to Congregation	By another district pastor or district representative
Charge to the candidate/ordinand	By mentor of candidate or district representative
Ordinand's response	
<i>Prayer of ordination and laying on of hands</i>	<i>By church leaders and at least one district representative</i>
<i>Presentation of Ordination Certificate</i>	<i>This should be done by the District Representative or another EFCA ordained pastor</i>
Worship	
Benediction	