



# PREPARING FOR ORDINATION

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS FOR  
BUSY LADIES

# *Preparing for Ordination*

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Educational Options for Busy Ladies Preparing for Ordination in the  
Rocky Mountain Ministry Network

By Gene Roncone

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Gene Roncone** has a passion to help people explore and develop their call to full-time ministry. For years he has coached and led small groups of young adults who are exploring God's call to ministry. Gene presently serves as the District Superintendent/Network Pastor of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network where he provides support, resourcing, and training for nearly 170 churches and 600 ministers serving over 44,000 constituents in Colorado and Utah. Gene also enjoys podcasting and has authored several books including *Rise Up*, *Isolation in Ministry*, *Prevailing Over Impossibility*, and *A Season for Legacy*. He enjoys reading, wilderness camping, and spending time with his wife, Rhonda, their adult children, and their grandchildren. You can contact Gene through [www.generoncone.org](http://www.generoncone.org).

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## ***1: An Alarming Statistic?***

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It happened while I was writing a new chapter for our Network's pastoral transition manual. The chapter's purpose was to encouraging search committees to consider females when selecting candidates for lead pastors. It was then that I uncovered an alarming statistic. If a pastoral search committee wants an ordained person for a lead pastor, only 4,000 females in the entire nation would qualify! Let me explain.

At the time of this writing, the Assemblies of God USA has 37,713 ministers. 27%, or 10,281, of our credentialed ministers are female. Of those 10,281 female ministers, 2,214 are certified, 4,016 are licensed and 4,051 are ordained. Did you catch that? Only 4,051 women nationally are ordained and thus qualified for any elected position on a local, district, region or national level that requires ordination. *Another way to say it is that 60% of female ministers have not chosen to seek a credential that would give them upward mobility.* If the licensed females alone took 10 classes (at the most) and advanced to ordained, we would DOUBLE the number of females qualified and available for service in churches requiring their pastor to be ordained.

Ladies, we need your help! All the awareness, open doors, advocacy, and scriptural enlightenment can't replace a personal passion for ministry preparedness. Help us out and keep advancing your credential and growing in preparedness. We are here to help and have prepared this short eBook to give you options.

## ***2: Why Should I be Ordained?***

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If God is the one who called you to the ministry, why is it important to be ordained by an organization; or if you already have a ministerial license, why should you advance to ordination?

These are excellent questions that deserve a thoughtful response. Ordination is an important process that has a biblical precedent and should be taken with the utmost seriousness. There are several reasons why it should be important to you, to the church, and to God's people. If you are reading this today and have not taken the next step to advance your credential, let me give you a few reasons why you should.

**Ordination is a biblical model.** Ordination can be defined as the public ceremony by which an ecclesiastical movement acknowledges the divine call, commission, and qualification of a person to serve in ministry. The tradition of ordination is found throughout the entire Bible. We see it symbolized through the act of the laying on of hands (Numbers 8:10, 27:18-23, Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 5:22). Those who were in spiritual leadership and authority laid hands upon and prayed for those who were acknowledged to be called, qualified, and ordained to ministry. Moses did this with Joshua in Deuteronomy 34:9. The church leaders did it with Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:3. In most denominations, ordination is only available to men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These are people who are fulfilling one of the types of equipping ministries described in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Ordination is important because it is biblically exemplified and commanded.

**Ordination is different from licensing.** There are some things that cannot and should not be rushed. The Apostle Paul taught us that ordination was one of those things when he said, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22, NIV). The New American Standard version states this admonition much more strongly when it says, "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others". Licensing recognizes the call of God on a person's life. Its focus is on the individual, their character, call, and preparedness for ministry. A ministerial license is a symbol of our accountability structure recognizing

the “call of God” upon a person’s life. After licensing, there is a time of “testing and watching” the fruits, patterns, and effectiveness of one’s ministry that flow from that call. While licensing focuses on the individual, ordination seeks to examine the ministry that flows from that person. The time in between licensing and ordination is the period where leadership fulfills their biblical obligation to observe your ministry, not just your calling. It gives leadership time to examine the fruits of your ministry and make an informed and Spirit-led decision about how effective that call works itself out in the context and pressures of ministry. Licensing is about your calling; ordination is a recognition of God’s blessing on your ministry. An invention is not considered an innovation until it can prove itself effective outside the sterile and predictable environment of a laboratory. In the same way, a calling is not fully recognized unless it can prove itself spiritually effective in the real-life context of ministry. That is why ordination is important. It is a formal recognition of the maturity of your call.

**Ordination is important for accountability.** Ordination is the act of having a spiritual authority over you to recognize your ability to represent God and His word to His people, to the world, and to the church. You remain accountable to this spiritual authority in areas of moral wholesomeness, family health, doctrinal purity, ministerial ethics, corporate integrity, financial uprightness, and leadership standards. Even Paul, after receiving the call directly from God in a vision, submitted to baptism, the laying on of hands, and the leadership of the Jerusalem church. Ordination is important to those who seek and welcome biblical accountability.

**Ordination is important for credibility.** Full-time ministry in most churches involves the official endorsement of a reputable denomination or organization. These organizations fulfill the biblical pattern of an authority structure that confirms your call, qualifications, accountability, integrity, theological preparation, effectiveness, and readiness to minister. This confirmation is usually in the form of ordination, and recognition of your call from a church denomination. If it is a reputable organization, it will take this step seriously and use an extensive process of application, testing, interviews, and a solemn ordination service. This process will ensure:

- The genuineness of your Christian experience.
- The sufficiency of your spiritual, moral, emotional, and societal maturity.
- The reality of your divine call.
- The correctness of your doctrine.

- The adequacy of your preparation and abilities.
- Your commitment to community and collaboration.

The important thing to remember is that if God has called you, your call will be evident to godly leaders who serve in authority over you. When you seek their confirmation, they will either say yes, no or wait. Whatever the answer may be, ordination is the most important public confirmation you can receive that you are credible and that your ministry and doctrine can be trusted.

**Ordination is important for responsibility.** Full-time employment in churches can usually be divided into two categories: ordained and nonordained staff. Most churches have employees who are not ordained. These people work in ministry without being ordained and usually serve in areas that support ministry functions. Paid administrative assistants, janitors, nursery directors, ministry directors, media personnel, and musicians are examples of nonordained employment opportunities in a church. However, ordained ministry usually carries greater authority and responsibility in the local church. In many denominations, ordination is so important that their churches require it for a person to serve on the pastoral staff, perform weddings, baptize converts, serve communion, or represent the church at denominational gatherings. As a matter of fact, the bylaws of most Assemblies of God churches require those who serve as a lead pastor be ordained. Why? Because even lay people, deacons, and pastoral search committees feel that ordination enables an individual to steward greater responsibility.

**Ordination is important for the health of the local church.** Ordination ensures that the pastoral leadership within the local church is comprised of individuals who are proven, qualified, genuine, and divinely called. It also helps to maintain a higher level of doctrinal purity within the body of Christ as well as an accountability structure outside of a team or local context.

**Ordination creates a partnership of trust.** Ordination is the official recognition that you and your ministry have proven to be valuable, needed, and affirmed in the greater body of Christ. In a way, it is as though the entire Fellowship of the Assemblies of God is saying, “Not only do we acknowledge the call of God upon your life and your commitment to that call, but we also express our willingness to put confidence in your ministry’s contribution and leadership should God ever anoint you to lead us.” That is a powerful thing in and of itself.

**Ordination increases our capacity for leadership.** At the time of this writing 43% of our RMMN ministers (men and women) are NOT ordained. That should concern all of us. Why? Because the kingdom of God and the leadership pool in our churches, network and national leadership community is being limited. Our leadership pipeline will never exceed our level of ordination!

This is true on every level. Most all pastoral search committees in the local church require a person to be ordained before they can be considered a candidate for the lead pastorate. That means, in most cases, non-ordained females are limiting themselves to associate roles in the local church. Now let's widen the lens and look at our Network. According to our network bylaws, the highest levels of leadership in our network require ordination. For example, the district superintendent/network pastor, assistant superintendent, secretary treasurer, executive presbyters, every member of the presbytery, provisional presbyters, and those empowered to call a special meeting of the Network Council in the event of an emergency are all required to be ordained. The same is true nationally. All regional or National leadership positions on the General Presbytery, Executive Presbytery or Executive Leadership Team require a person to be ordained.

What does this mean for a female minister? It means our movement's exposure to female leadership, vision, and potential will be limited to the pool of those who are ordained. In other words, ordination is the lid that determines our highest potential and capacity as an organization. Anyone who believes in leadership succession should also be equally passionate about ordination. We owe it to ourselves and our future to maintain the highest percentage of ordained ministers within our network.

**Ordination has benefits and privileges.** To recognize and honor the sacrifice, commitment, and ministry accomplishments of those who have achieved the highest level of credential, the Rocky Mountain Ministry offers exclusive benefits to those who are ordained. Among these benefits is a 50% discount on all graduate level tuition in the Masters and PhD programs of Trinity Bible College and Seminary. As one of our primary educational partners, Trinity assists us by investing in leaders already serving in our Network, as well as increasing our ability to recruit new ministers to serve as lead pastors and staff in our RMMN churches. For more information on the qualifications and requirements of this and other benefits, contact the District Superintendent's office or visit [www.agspe.org/trinityscholarship.pdf](http://www.agspe.org/trinityscholarship.pdf).



If you desire to grow in ministry effectiveness, one of the decisions you will have to make is whether you want others to recognize and affirm your calling (licensing) or your ministry (ordination). And believe me, there is a big difference between the two. That is why I believe the Bible places such a significant emphasis upon ordination. It signifies a greater level of biblical obedience, ministry maturity, accountability, credibility, opportunity, responsibility, partnership, and health for the local church.

That is also why I am appealing to all the credentialed females in our network who are not ordained to contact our Secretary/Treasurer's office and take your next step—whatever that may be. Why? Because the future needs you! I need you, the network needs you, our churches need you. More importantly, the kingdom needs you.

### ***3: The Importance of Formal Training***

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The call of God is a call to preparation. Many people don't understand the need for ministerial training. They may ask, "Why isn't the call of God enough? Why should I waste time getting an education when people are dying and going to hell each day?"

In this chapter, I would like to answer three important questions.

- Why is formal training important?
- What will it consist of?
- How can I get it?

**Let's start with why formal training is important.** The ministry is a profession that requires a unique set of skills and knowledge to minister on a spiritual level. Passion is good, but passion without education is what gives rise to false teaching, heresy, and cults. Billy Graham was one of the most effective and well-known ministers of the century—but so is the cult leader David Koresh. Mother Teresa changed lives for many years in Calcutta, India—but Mary Baker Eddy changed lives by starting a false religion. William Carey is most remembered for his missions work in a foreign land—but so is Jim Jones. Passion without education does more harm than good.

When God calls a person to ministry, He first prepares them. After God called the Apostle Paul, He required him to spend three years preparing in the desert. Paul was obedient even though he had already completed rigorous training as a Jewish Pharisee. What about Jesus? He spent the first 30 years of His life preparing for three-and-a-half years of ministry.

Things have not changed much. Like God, most churches and denominations require their ministers to have some kind of formal education. The extent and type of educational requirements vary depending on the group or the level of credential desired. Nearly all reputable denominations use a process to confirm that you have satisfied some form of minimal educational requirements. In most cases, this involves the following:

- Reviewing your educational history.
- Evaluating your ministry experience.

- Requiring you to submit an application.
- Taking a series of tests covering everything from your temperament, doctrine, Bible knowledge, theology, church history, polity, and practical ministry.
- A personal interview.

This might seem extreme but let me assure you that it is not. After three decades in ministry, I have seen one truth demonstrated time and again. A person rarely experiences a ministry deeper than their preparation. Your future ministry is a lot like a building. Its height, width, and length will never exceed the strength of the foundation of preparation.

**What will your formal training consist of?** Although it may vary in each church or denomination, formal training is most likely to include instruction in the following areas:

- **Bible:** You will take courses to help you understand the books of the Bible, how they are related to each other, and what makes them different.
- **Hermeneutics:** That is a fancy word that describes the skills needed to correctly interpret the Bible in its original context and language.
- **Theology:** In other words, categories of truth on important topics like God, man, sin, salvation, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, end times, and other subjects.
- **Preaching and teaching:** You will learn how to isolate and teach important truths, write sermons, and communicate God's Word to people.
- **Church history:** How God has worked in, through, and with His people down through the centuries.
- **Discipleship:** How to be intentional in helping people of all ages systematically grow in their faith and Christian maturity.
- **Church administration and leadership:** You will be taught how to use process, mobilize resources and lead people to minister more effectively.
- **Church ceremonies:** You will learn how to lead communion services and perform ceremonies like baptisms, weddings, funerals, and baby dedications.

- **Pastoral counseling:** You will learn the basic skills to help people work through the emotional problems and various kinds of life crisis they may be facing.
- **And many other important subjects that ministers must have a working knowledge and familiarity with if they are going to be successful.**

**Now let's talk about how you can get this needed training.** A person called of God to ministry must undergo formal preparation to be ordained. There are three basic options in acquiring this. I will list them in the degree of difficulty.

- **Local entrustment.** One, seek an independent or self-proclaimed ordination based on life experience or the authority of a local pastor. A credential that is provided by a local church is not transferable and only enables one to serve in the church that issued it and under the leader that signed it. Although they require the least amount of preparation and have the lowest level of accountability, a few independent and non-denominational churches provide them.
- **Distance learning.** Two, participate in a certified correspondence or online degree program that satisfies the needed educational requirements. Trinity Bible School, Pathway and Berean School of the Bible are examples of programs that can help you and will be discussed in the next chapter.
- **Residential college.** Three, attend an accredited Bible college or university which gives a formal degree, while at the same time meets your denomination's educational requirements.

I am among a vast number of ministers who believe that a formal Bible college or seminary provides the best training for ministerial preparation. We will talk more about this in the next chapter, but it isn't too late to start praying about this important subject now.

## ***4: Online Alternatives for Credential Advancement***

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If you're reading this, chances are you are a female minister who has already been certified or licensed. So, how do you get the needed education to advance your credential. After all, not everyone can go to a residential Bible College. Some women are called to ministry after having already earned a degree in some other field. Others may have received a call to ministry after having been in another career path for decades. Several may not be able to afford the cost of a residential Bible College. A few will already have had children and families that make them unable to devote their full time to study. Others are in co-vocational ministry that requires them to take classes on the side while working a secular job and ministering in a local church at the same time. Whatever the case may be, there are some powerful alternatives to getting a good education without attending a residential Bible college. Here are a few of my favorite options listed in order of convenience.

1. **Trinity Bible College.** If you're looking for the perfect balance between flexibility, affordability, options and academics, Trinity is your place. That is why the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network enjoys a collaborative partnership with Trinity Bible College and Graduate School in Ellendale, North Dakota. Although they are a residential Bible college, they provide a powerfully unique online experience. Their ministerial training is offered online in either an accredited or non-accredited learning track. Both can be converted down the road towards graduate study, and both meet the minimum standards for all three levels of an Assemblies of God credential (certified, licensed and ordained).
- **MyTrinity Online™ Certificate of Ministry Program.** Trinity's online classes offer a certificate of ministry training that is approved for all three levels of ministerial credentialing with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed, and ordained). These 100% online programs allow participants to take the same accredited classes offered in Trinity's ministry degrees at a fraction of the cost. Not only does this help individuals move into ministry more quickly with less debt, but it also provides a high-quality academic education and training in the process. It also

provides an opportunity for students to move seamlessly into a full degree program at Trinity should they so choose.

Each course is taught by one of Trinity's professors and students have regular access to professors through online course interaction, email, phone, and/or online video calls. All courses are run through Trinity's online course platform (Moodle), where students will have access to course notes, lectures, assignments, and other course materials. All courses in the Certificate of Ministry Training can transfer over into any of Trinity's degree programs.

- **MyTrinity Online™ B.A. & A.A. in Biblical Studies Degree.** Trinity offers a Biblical Studies Degree that is 100% online. The core courses and general education classes in this program are the same as a residential program but more affordable and convenient. They can also be a pathway to their graduate program if desired.

Trinity has put together a quality program with accumulating opportunities. More information about these and other programs offered by Trinity Bible College can be found at [www.mytrinity.online](http://www.mytrinity.online).

2. **Pathway (Online Interactive Learning).** Pathway is the newest innovation in online ministerial training and credential advancement. The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network has established a formal partnership with them that we believe has tremendous potential. Pathway was created as just that...a pathway to get both formal Bible education and an Assemblies of God credential at the same time. They are a "Church-Based Bible Institute" that has been approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The Bible training they provide will give you a great education, while also fulfilling the educational requirements needed to apply for all three levels of credentialing with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed and ordained).

Pathway is one of the most innovative approaches I have seen to earning all three levels of ministerial credentials. The following characteristics make it uniquely user-friendly.

- **Fully online.** All their courses and materials are online. This means you don't need to buy, order or ship books! All you need is accessible by your computer or smartphone.
- **App-based.** Once you register for your subscription through the Pathway website, you can then use the platform through Pathway's app. Their app will then enable you to access your courses anywhere and anytime. That means you don't need to learn complicated educational technology platforms like Blackboard or Moodle. To access the app, just search for "Pathway Training" in your app store.
- **Self-paced.** You can progress as fast as you like. There are no due dates or completion windows for any assignments, and you may take as long as you want in any course! That means no long waits for annual class rotations, inconvenient meeting times or inconsistent class schedules.
- **Subscription based.** A subscription of \$50 a month will give you access to their entire catalog. This makes all credentialing courses and electives available to you.
- **Credit mobility.** Because Pathway has partnered with Assemblies of God universities, you can continue your studies and transfer over more than a full year's worth of credits to a partnering university.
- **Gamified experience.** Earn points and badges to level up as you progress through the courses. Check the leaderboard to see how you match up to your friends.

Pathway's online interface allows you to track your progress, view your professor's feedback to coursework and get an all-access pass to all of their credentialing courses and any future electives they publish. For more information go to <https://pathway.training>.

3. **Global University (traditional correspondence school).** Global University provides both a formal accredited (degree) and non-accredited (diploma) option to complete your ministerial training through their online correspondence courses. These are offered in English and Spanish. The non-accredited (diploma) track is not transferable to other universities but is affordable and strategically aligned with the Assemblies of God's educational requirements for all three levels of ministerial credentials (certified, licensed and ordained). Students register, pay and order books for each individual

class and are given a deadline to complete the requirements. Once each of the three levels are completed, they automatically meet the appropriate educational requirements for a credential with the Assemblies of God.

- **Non-accredited (Berean School of the Bible diploma).**  
Upon successful completion of the Ministerial Studies Program, students should be prepared for credentialing interviews and tests for each of the corresponding levels of credential (certified, licensed and ordained). The student will have mastered the basic Bible content (Old and New Testaments), theological principles, and practical ministry skills for service in a church leadership position. Ministerial credentials are issued by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, not by Global University. This program provides academic training, not ministerial recognition. Fees are very affordable.
- **Accredited degree (Global University MA Degree).** This degree prepares you to minister and serve with professional excellence as pastor, educator, leader, missionary, and support staff within church, missions, and educational organizations. Upon successful completion, students will have met the minimum educational requirements for all three levels of credentials (certified, licensed and ordained). Ministerial credentials are issued by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, not by Global University. This program provides academic training, not ministerial recognition. Tuition is considerably higher than the non-accredited track and the course work is more demanding.

More information on these and other programs offered by Global University can be found at [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu).

As you can see, it is possible to find various options to receive quality ministerial training without attending a residential Bible college. The benefits of these options are:



- **Flexibility.** The primary benefit of online learning involves scheduling flexibility. You sign up for the classes when you want without having to move, travel, miss work or block out predetermined class times. Students can work during the day and complete coursework in the evenings or on the weekends.
- **Affordability.** Online education is more economical as you are not paying for on-campus housing, meal plans, hardbound books, travel back and forth during semester breaks or having to quit an existing job.
- **Convenience.** Online ministerial education allows for a more comfortable learning environment because you complete class work at home, in a coffee shop or library. You can basically work anywhere there is a good internet connection.
- **Pace.** You can move at a pace and rhythm that complements your own lifestyle and unique situation.
- **Sustainability.** Online education allows you to stay connected with your existing job, relationships and emotional and spiritual support base.
- **Development.** Online ministerial training allows you to both learn and apply what you are learning while continuing ministry in your current church or ministry. You are in essence turning your current ministry, whether volunteer or paid, into a practical laboratory of learning and personal growth.
- **Technical skills.** Online ministerial training gives you the opportunity to develop and sustain valuable technical skills such as doing online research, discussion boards, teleconferencing, streaming and educational platforms.
- **Financial aid.** The accredited options allow you to access financial aid, grants and scholarships.
- **Opportunity.** Should you later decide the Lord is calling you to full-time ministry, all of the above options would position you to have met the minimal educational requirements for all three levels of an Assemblies of God credential (certified, licensed and ordained).

Perhaps the most powerful benefit of any of these online options is accelerated personal growth. Should the Lord ever calling you to be a lead pastor or leader within our fellowship, you must be ordained before that calling, not after. If you believe female leadership makes a needed and positive contribution to the Kingdom of God, authenticity calls you to advance to ordination. It's a win/win for you, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

If I can be of any help to you as you try to identify a path for ministerial education and preparation, please feel free to contact me at any time at [gene@rmdc.org](mailto:gene@rmdc.org).

I remain committed to your success,

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