

Want To Be a Minister?

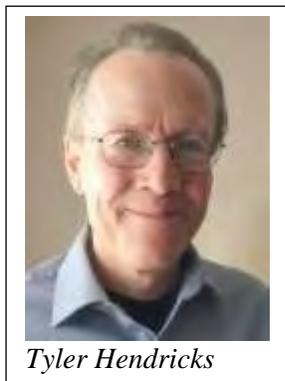
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The path to professional ministry would seem to be simple, but it is very complex — for the aspirant and for the community they hope to serve.

In order to ordain their spiritual leaders, i.e., pastors, religious institutions have to: define their purposes, their beliefs, their standards of practice for members as well as leaders, put all this in writing, and set up methods to inculcate these things. Methods include general pastoral care and education as well as pastor preparation, measuring people's performance in achieving them, and helping people overcome their failures in achieving them.

One indicator of the difficulties involved is that our Unification community, after over 60 years of formal existence and spreading throughout the world, has no ordination. What does one do to become a Unificationist pastor? What do pastors do? Do we even *want* pastors? Should pastors get paid? How do we assign a pastor to a congregation? By election or appointment? We have no formal or consistent answers to these questions.



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Another indicator is the fact that it was not until now that we in the U.S. have set forth publicly what it means to be a Unificationist, what is unique about us, what is our position on smoking and drinking, abortion, religious freedom, and many such matters (to get involved in this discussion, see the PDF “FAQ” on the FFWPU-USA site).

From the viewpoint of human history, this is not surprising. It takes religions a long time to decide these things. And there is a very compelling reason: in reality, for religions that last, the answers to these questions are not decided by theory, but by practice. We could call it “form follows function,” or use the traditional saying, “necessity is the mother of invention.”

What follows is a progress report on how this is working for our Unificationist community here in the U.S.

The Case of Dr. William Selig

Last year, UTS graduate William Selig (M.R.E. 1981, D.Min. 2012) entered upon his final steps to gain Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) certification. One of those steps was to provide evidence he is an ordained minister of his church and that his church is an authentic one according to Association standards. In the process of working with Rev. Selig on this, the Family Federation backed into an ordination policy. It's a perfect illustration that necessity is the mother of invention, and form follows function.

The FFWPU-USA's legal office, Rev. Selig and Rev. Ernest Patton, William's District Pastor, assembled materials, some of which were in place and some of which had to be created, in response to the APC form which gathers the information it expects an ordaining church to have, describing both itself and the person it ordained.

In fact, the Family Federation did go through this in the mid-1990s, when UTS graduate Jeffrey Nakama applied to become a military chaplain. By piecing together the same kinds of materials, our Unification Church came to be recognized as an “endorsing institution,” a bona fide religion on a par, in the eyes of the U.S. Department of Defense, with the Catholic Church and any other church. When Dr. Joon Ho Seuk reported this to Reverend Moon, his response, according to Dr. Seuk, was, “I've been waiting for this all my life.”

So we had that in place, but the questions the APC asked required a more thorough response, and, at the same time, HSA-UWC was now capable of providing a more substantial response. Here is an outline of what we did. The documents I mention are on hand and part of the public record.

The Ordination

The APC expects, and we agree, that to be ordained the candidate feels God's call to ministry, fulfills the church's membership expectations, and has served a congregation in a recognized way. He or she has been mentored by a pastor for at least the preceding year, has fulfilled one or more of the church's stated educational requirements, and has fulfilled one unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE) or the equivalent. The candidate has given a worthy sermon or public testimony and taught a workshop or the equivalent. The candidate has his or her pastor's recommendation and an invitation to undertake formal pastoral service.

The Family Federation made the educational requirement, the one unit of CPE and Blessing status, negotiable. That is, it will accept a person who has not fulfilled these if he/she merits acceptance on other grounds.

To gain ordination, the candidate submits an application to a District Pastor. In order to meet the APC standards, this application includes the following: Candidate's Application for Ordination, Unification Minister's Affirmation, Invitation from the Receiving Congregation or Ministry Institution, Blessing and Family Ministry Recommendation, Fiduciary Duty Examination, and Divine Principle Examination.

The District Pastor reviews the application and interviews the candidate. Upon his or her approval, the District Pastor submits the application to an Ecclesiastical Endorser, along with a letter or recommendation. The Endorser reviews this and, if all the ducks are in a row, submits a report and recommendation to the President for final approval. The following documents are necessary: District Pastor Recommendation, Official Endorser Approval, President's Approval and an Ordination Certificate.



A U.S. Navy chaplain holds mass for Marines in Afghanistan

APC Acceptance of the Family Federation

As mentioned above, the APC also must be assured that the ordaining body is a bona fide religious organization. To merit this, the Family Federation had to provide answers to these APC questions:

When was the congregation founded? How many members does the congregation have? What is the structure and organization of the congregation? How is clergy leadership obtained for the congregation? How are persons prepared and trained for ministry and pastoral care service? What are the procedures followed by the congregation in ordaining and endorsing

clergy for pastoral care service (chaplaincy)?

The FFWPU-USA had to provide the APC copies of the following documents: the Articles of Incorporation, Governing Documents, Mission/Confessional/Creedal Statements, Ordained Pastor's Responsibilities, Authoritative Operating Documents (Policies and Procedures pertaining to Public Ministers including a Professional Code of Ethics), Conflict of Interest Policy and Whistleblower Policy, Pastor's Affirmation, Standards and Procedures for Endorsement of Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors and Clinical Educators, the IRS 501(c)(3) certificate or documentation of registration by the state as a not-for-profit religious entity, their own ordination certificate or commissioning letter, a current letter of endorsement from the official endorser, and "a well-rounded picture of your faith group."

Conclusion

This is a raft of drafts that give joy only to those who can fathom the translation of human life into documented procedures. One has to be something of a scholar to even want to penetrate the intricacies of them. But I hope that these forms, affirmations and processes will stand the test of time for the sake of equipping our members who are called to professional ministry and abetting the give and take between our faith communities and the wider society.

This essay documents what is, not what I or others think should be. In this, it provides a reference point in the discussion of Unification ordination. Some may advise that the educational requirement, the one unit of CPE and/or the Blessing status should not be negotiable. I would advise that any changes in policy be evidence-based. Once we have a reasonable body of data, we can ask whether level of education, Blessing status, or CPE experience correlate with superior pastoral service to the community.

As our community deepens its self-understanding and perfects its path to contribute to the healing of the world, it is good to be aware that, at least in the eyes of the Association of Professional Chaplains, we

have an ordination policy. To fail to follow this policy now, without careful review and development of it, would be a breach of public trust, and that would *de facto* and *de jure* disqualify us from responsible inclusion in the professional community of faith groups in the United States.

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