

**APPOINTMENT AND ASSESSMENT POLICY OF LAY PASTORS
IN THE O.M.S. HOLINESS CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA (1995)
(Proposition at General Conference 1994)**

INTRODUCTION

The Revised Constitution of the OMS Holiness Church of North America provides for the designation of lay pastors to serve in Conference churches when ordained ministers are not available.

Article IV, Section A lists ordained ministers; candidates for ordination; student pastors; and “lay preachers who are ‘interim’ pastors of a local church’ as those comprising the “Active Ministers” of the conference. These lay pastors are further defined as “Mature lay members who are designated to serve as pastors in the absence of a qualified minister.”

This policy seeks to clarify the identity and role of lay pastors, and establishes guidelines for their appointment and assessment.

THE DEFINITION AND ROLE OF LAY PASTORS

While ordination has become the standard for ministry today, the church has always recognized that leadership rises out of the community of God’s people. It is not because one has a seminary degree that one is fit for ministry, but because the church recognizes and affirms the gifts and call of a particular individual to a particular ministry (e.g. the selection of deacons in Acts 6, and the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13).

Ideally, the church is able to find someone with a seminary degree to fill pastoral positions. However, there may be times in the life of the church when the need for pastoral leadership exceeds the supply of such trained personnel. God’s work, however, is not put on hold. God’s Spirit, alive and at work in Christ’s Body, the Church, equips and inspires lay people to do the work of ministry, including that of pastoral ministry, even when the advantage of a seminary-trained and ordained pastor is unavailable.

In the absence of an ordained pastor, a church may still thrive under the leadership of a lay leader who displays pastoral gifts and who earns the respect and trust of the particular congregation. In such a case, it is the prerogative of the local church to request, and the Ordained Ministerial Body to confer, the status of lay pastor to such an individual.

A lay pastor, when, is a lay person who has been called by God, recognized by a local congregation, and authorized by the Ordained Ministerial Body to perform specific duties in a designated local church or within the Conference, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship, for a designated time, under the supervision and guidance of the Ordained Ministerial Body and the Ministerial

Appointment Committee. The work of the lay pastor may be conducted either part-time or full-time.

PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF A LAY PASTOR

The Constitution's single descriptive term for a lay pastor is the word "mature." We take this to mean that a lay pastor is one who is compelled by the gospel of Jesus Christ, has a sense of having been called by God and the Church to pastoral leadership, is committed to the work of the ministry and can clearly articulate a personal theological position.

To guide churches and individuals in their assessment of potential lay pastors, we offer the following:

Personal qualities of a lay pastor should include:

- .A Christian life-style
- .An open and affirming style of relating to people and ideas
- .A sense of personal identity
- .Ability to acknowledge personal limitations
- .A capacity for growth and development
- .A sense of responsibility and accountability
- .Integrity
- .Resourcefulness and adaptability
- .Willingness to submit to authority

Knowledge which can be demonstrated by a lay pastor should include:

- .The Bible
- .Biblical interpretation
- .Theology
- .Worship, sacraments and liturgy
- .Church history
- .Christian ethics
- .Contemporary culture
- .History of the OMS Holiness Church of North America

Skills which can be demonstrated by a lay pastor should include:

- .Preaching and leading worship
- .Pastoral care
- .Listening and communicating

APPLICATION FOR LAY PASTOR STATUS

The initiative for appointing a lay pastor rests with the local congregation, in whose midst an individual's gifts and call are best recognized. The board of deacons of a local church may recommend a candidate for lay pastor status to the Ministerial Appointment Committee and the Ordained Ministerial Body.

Alternately, a candidate for lay pastor may also be suggested by the Ministerial Appointment Committee, or by members of the Ordained Ministerial Body.

The application form shall resemble that used for the acceptance of full-time workers in the Conference. The review and acceptance process shall also be similar to that taken for full-time workers.

Renewal of lay pastor's status shall be confirmed yearly at the meeting of the General Conference.

STANDING IN THE ORDAINED MINISTERIAL BODY

Under Article IV of the Revised Constitution, a candidate for ordination in the Holiness Church 'must be a graduate of a standard accredited seminary or one approved by this Conference.' However, "This may be waived in special cases subject to the approval of the Ministerial Body."

Therefore, it is the prerogative of the Ordained Ministerial Body, through the existing ordination candidacy process, to ordain lay pastors who demonstrate unusual giftedness in fulfilling their call to pastoral ministry. In such an exceptional case, the lay pastor would then become a full-fledged, ordained minister in the Conference, with all accompanying rights and privileges. Such standing may be conferred after a minimum four-year probationary period, during which time the lay pastor shall be supervised by a member or members of the Ordained Ministerial Body. If ordination is not conferred, the lay pastor's supervisory relationship shall continue for the duration of the lay pastor's service.

Wherever possible, lay pastors shall be encouraged to seek formal training in the disciplines involved in pastoral ministry, particularly when a lay pastor feels led by God to engage in such ministry on more than just an interim basis.

BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION

In the case of part-time work, a lay pastor and the local church shall determine the compensation to be received by the lay pastor.

If a lay pastor is employed full-time, compensation shall follow existing Conference guidelines for full-time ministers.

SUPERVISION AND REVIEW OF LAY PASTORS

Lay pastors shall be supervised by at least one member of the Ordained Ministerial Body during the probationary period of four years. This supervision shall include a review at least twice a year, at which times the lay pastor, the supervising pastor and members of the lay pastor's board of deacons shall meet to discuss and assess the lay pastor's ministry. The purpose of these reviews shall be to enhance the ministry of the lay pastor by offering encouragement and support wherever appropriate and possible.

DISCIPLINE

In the event of a complaint or serious questions regarding the ministry of a lay pastor, the supervising pastor(s) shall be responsible for determining the proper course of actions. The members of the regional ordained minister's body shall have jurisdiction over the issue, unless they choose to refer the matter to the whole Ordained Ministerial Body.

TERMINATION OF LAY PASTOR STATUS

The Ordained Ministerial Body shall terminate a lay pastor's standing under any of the following conditions:

1. Resignation from the appointed ministry.
2. The need and opportunities for the lay pastor's services are no longer evident.
3. The initiation of disciplinary proceedings results in a decision to terminate the lay pastor's status.
4. Failure to request renewal of the lay pastor's status.