

Why Credentials?

By David Hazzard



A recent news article reported that an individual economically acquired an online ordination in order to conduct a wedding. The article motivated me to briefly research such opportunities on the Internet. This proved to be both interesting and amusing! I discovered an organization that provides credentialing services for a nominal cost. In fact, the basic ordination package, including the certificate, is only \$58 U.S. *Why go to seminary*, they queried, *when we can grant you equal authority!* Another site offers *free, instant ordinations!* To think, I completed my theological education, carefully worked through the Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths of my Fellowship, served practically in a local church for the prescribed period of time all the while engaged a relational process with District colleagues, *and* paid credential fees! I did not realize that all I required to be ordained were vital signs and a VISA card!

The news article, however, also engendered a sincere sense of appreciation for the Fellowship we are a part of, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and the value we place on ministerial credentials. As a group of believers, we have, through the years, refined a responsible and relational process that serves the Kingdom by confidently providing ministerial credentials. A credential, of whatever kind, is really only as valuable as the organization providing it.

A PAOC ministerial credential is rooted in biblical principles and is consistent with the historic practice of the church (Galatians 2:6-10). It acknowledges a divine call and commission, the qualifications of a person to minister in the PAOC, affirms character as a Christian leader and extends fellowship blessings and opportunities. At the same time it expresses a credential holder's affirmation of dedication, faithfulness, and commitment to the Lord and to their colleagues, and invokes mutual divine enablement for success in life and ministry.

Any authority and power for ministry are conferred directly by Christ through the Holy Spirit. The living Lord of the Church continues to make direct, dynamic appointments in His body today. A credential is a collegial recognition of what Christ has done affirming:

1. The genuineness of one's experiences in Christ and in Spirit life;
2. The authenticity of one's spiritual, moral, emotional, and social maturity;
3. The reality of their divine call;
4. The correctness of their doctrine;

5. The adequacy of their preparation and practical abilities; and
6. The acceptability of their commitment to the Fellowship's purposes, policies and ministries.

By issuing ministerial credentials to qualified persons, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada serves its affiliated congregations and ministries by affirming that candidates for ministry have met the approved standards, and also serves the credential holder by confirming their eligibility for ministry.

Value to the Credential Holder

A first value is that a credential serves as the goal of a high level of spiritual, moral, emotional, social, intellectual, and ministerial maturity to which the credential holder aspires. Each credential holder seeks to continue to grow in all of these areas personally and professionally.

A second value is that a credential provides the individual the opportunity of collegial assessment in the areas of assessment noted above.

A third value is that a credential is often recognized as an indication of personal, professional, ministry and spiritual accomplishment.

A PAOC credential provides a fourth value in that it opens opportunities of ministry in the PAOC Fellowship and beyond. It is an essential key for acceptance in various pastoral, evangelistic, administrative, teaching, chaplaincy, and other ministries. A valued corollary to this is that ministry in the Fellowship provides reasonable assurance that the fruit of one's ministry will be preserved.

A fifth value of a credential is that it may qualify the minister to meet legal requirements for certain functions of ministry such as weddings, and serving on certain community, provincial, and federal boards or agencies, etc.

A sixth value, depending on the classification of the credential, is that it allows an individual to participate in the life of the Fellowship - supporting, contributing to the formulation of policies and programs, refining doctrine, holding office, and many other general or specific benefits.

A seventh value comes as a result of the recognition of the Canadian Revenue Agency of those qualified to receive the Clergy Housing deduction.

Value to the Fellowship

In the first place, credentials benefit the Fellowship by ensuring that its ministries are served by individuals who are appropriately qualified.

A second benefit to the Fellowship is that a credential provides a checkpoint to ensure a ministry has sufficient and correct understanding of Bible content and doctrine in order to strengthen the body of Christ.

A credential benefits the Fellowship by encouraging an effective level of practical ministerial functions of leadership, preaching/teaching, worship leading, administering the ordinances and performing the ceremonies, pastoral care and the administration (oversight and planning) for the departments, deacons, committees, staff, finances, public relations, building programs, etc.

And finally, a credential benefits the Fellowship by ascertaining that its ministers have an acceptable knowledge of and commitment to the policies and programs of the PAOC.

In conclusion, we wish to express appreciation for those individuals in the PAOC that serve in any dimension of Clergy Care, ministry support and Clergy Records, ensuring the maximum value of a PAOC credential. We also appreciate the 3,500 PAOC credential holders who serve the Lord with excellence and distinction, knowing that it is the Lord we are ultimately serving.

With blessing,

David.