

# Spirit & Truth Fellowship International

## Ordination Policy

### “Appointed Servants”

The Christian Church has had a longstanding practice of recognizing certain individuals through a process called ordination. Historically, this practice has divided the Christian community between the “clergy,” those ordained to perform certain religious rights and ceremonies, and the “laity,” the general body of worshippers. Unfortunately, in many instances this practice has resulted in an elite class of “priests” who were the ones primarily responsible for the work of ministry.

Thankfully, many Christian ministries have recognized the “priesthood” of the believer, with every Christian being equal in their standing before God. Every follower of Christ has been given personal gifts and callings, which are to be used in service to benefit the other members of the Body of Christ. All God’s people are called to minister (the word “minister” originally merely meant “to serve”) and the way each person serves may change throughout his or her lifetime.

Paul and others practiced appointing elders and overseers in the various Christian communities they established. At the time the King James Version of the Bible was written, the word “ordain” was used to translate the Greek word *kathistemi*. To “ordain” someone merely meant “to appoint,” “to set,” or “to place.” Unfortunately, today the concept of ordaining a person has acquired a much greater spiritual significance than was ever intended or practiced in the first-century church.

#### **Titus 1:5**

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and **appoint** elders in every town, as I directed you.

In another instance, the King James translators used “ordained” for the Greek word *cheirotoneo*. This word was generally used when an appointment had occurred as the result of a voting process. Again, what is important to note is that “ordaining” is simply an appointment of some type. The New International Version of the Bible properly translates *cheirotoneo* as “appointed.”

#### **Acts 14:23 (KJV)**

And when they had **ordained** them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

#### **Acts 14:23**

Paul and Barnabas **appointed** elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Jesus taught and modeled for his disciples that “The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matt. 23:11). He further explained that, unlike the Gentile who wields authority over people, the greatest leaders are to be the greatest servants.

#### **Matthew 20:25-27**

(25) Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

(26) Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

(27) and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—

Leaders in the Body of Christ are to follow the model of servant-leadership, and not only are we to serve, but the type of service we are to perform is the laying down of our lives for one another, just as he did.

### **Matthew 20:28**

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

In similar fashion, when Jesus appeared to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, he told him that he was “appointing him as a servant.”

### **Acts 26:16**

Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

Ordination of “clergy” is not something that was practiced by Jesus’ followers in the beginning of the Christian church. People were appointed to oversee and to provide leadership (eldership) to their spiritual community because of the service they were already providing to others. The appointments did not confer any special spiritual gifts, privileges, or rights; rather, they were merely the public acknowledgement of a person’s gifting already in use.

We acknowledge that individuals were “appointed to serve” as elders and overseers in the first-century church, but this does not negate the truth that all of the members of the Body of Christ are equal in their standing before God. There is no hierarchy when it comes to our standing before God.

### **1 Corinthians 12:12 and 13**

(12) The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

(13) For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Spirit & Truth Fellowship emphasizes that in our practice of ordination, we are not creating any spiritual hierarchy, or elite class of “clergy.” We strongly resist the tendency of people to do this, and thus make a deliberate choice to establish an organizational culture that promotes service by all, and most especially those we ordain. For this reason we do not use titles such as Reverend, or Pastor, when referring to our ministers. In fact, we purposefully employ the term “minister” in reference to those we have ordained because it means “a servant.”

## **Why We Ordain Certain Individuals**

We believe there are times when ordination is beneficial, for both the individual ordained and the faith community at large. Our primary reason for ordaining certain individuals is because it sometimes affords them an increased ability to serve others. Traditionally, this increased service as a “minister”

includes the ability to officiate at weddings, and provides special rights of visitation to those who are sick or in prison. There are also times when ordination may increase a person's ability to serve by allowing them to represent Spirit & Truth Fellowship in a geographical area, and to carry some administrative responsibilities on behalf of the organization.

Spirit & Truth Fellowship ordains individuals in two general categories. The first is those individuals who serve in a particular capacity or function. The second is those who serve in a more general way in a geographical area. Although we are drawing the distinction at this time between the two categories of ordination, we also acknowledge that there are some who fall into both because there will be some who serve in both capacities at the same time. In all instances we are not conferring upon the person any special spiritual powers, authority, or rights. Rather, as an organization, we are only recognizing publicly a personal gift and calling that has already been in operation in service to God's people.

## **Qualifications for Ordination**

Spirit and Truth Fellowship places the highest level of organizational trust and confidence in those it ordains. In essence, those ordained through this ministry represent Christ, as well as the organization of Spirit & Truth Fellowship. Ordination by its very nature carries an organizational endorsement of the individual, and also a responsibility to live in a manner worthy of this trust. As such, every person seeking ordination must qualify in the areas of personal character, competency in ministry, commitment to Christ (as well as to the ministry of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International), consistency in performance, and cohesion (connectedness to others and this ministry).

### **Character**

God makes it very clear that He is very concerned about our character. Character has been described as the summation of a person's life choices. We are all given gifts from God, but what we do with them and how we use them is the result of the type of character a person has developed. We all struggle with sin and our flesh (carnal) nature, but we, as ministers of the Gospel of Christ, must be ever increasing in godliness, and demonstrating the character of Christ through the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22). God is not looking for perfect people, but people who are earnestly following Jesus, who is perfect. Those ordained by Spirit & Truth Fellowship must demonstrate the godly character and lifestyle commensurate with the requirements for overseers and deacons according to 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Too often, very gifted men and women of God have fallen from grace, not because of their gifts or callings, but because they failed in the area of character.

### **Competency**

Those "appointed to serve" must be proficient in their scriptural knowledge of sound doctrine and its practice. Competency must be demonstrated in four areas.

1. All "ministers" must be competent in their knowledge and understanding of the fundamental truths of the Christian Faith expressed in Ephesians 4, specifically the "Seven Ones."
2. We recognize that Spirit & Truth Fellowship may hold some historically unique doctrinal positions. Those ordained with this ministry must be able to "contend for the faith" by being able to properly express and defend the doctrinal positions of our Statement of Beliefs.
3. Every person ordained by Spirit & Truth Fellowship is a representative of this organization and as such they must be proficient in their understanding of our vision, mission, and core values, as well as other organizational details.

4. Each person must demonstrate sufficient skill and knowledge of their particular area of gifting. Having a spiritual calling and operating competently in that calling are two different matters. Spiritual competency requires growth and maturity, as well as walking with wisdom.

### **Commitment**

All Spirit & Truth Fellowship ministers are ordained (appointed) to serve in our faith community and therefore must have demonstrated commitment to our organizational vision, mission, doctrine and practices, and core values.

### **Consistency**

God warns against promoting a novice too soon, otherwise he or she may become puffed up and fall into the temptation of ego and pride. Spirit & Truth Fellowship only ordains those individuals who have proven themselves to be stable and consistent in their walk with Christ and their support of this ministry. Any candidate for ordination cannot be someone who runs hot and cold, or who is unstable because of double-mindedness.

### **Cohesion**

All ministers must be connected to our faith community and enjoy a good reputation within the local area they serve.

## **Ordination Licenses**

All Certificates of Ordination shall remain valid on the following conditions.

### **All certificate holders agree that they:**

1. Will operate under the authority and jurisdiction of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International.
2. Will at all times maintain a good reputation with those they serve, as well as the general faith community of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International.
3. Will demonstrate their continued support of the organization through their service and support.
4. Will relinquish and return any Certificate of Ordination if requested to do so by Spirit & Truth Fellowship International

## **The Ordination Process:**

- I. Recognition
- II. Nomination
- III. Development
- IV. Ordination and Release

### **Step One: Recognition**

Ordination is the public recognition of someone who is walking as a godly Christian, walking in his calling to the degree that the Church recognizes his public service, walking in accordance with the guidelines for overseers in Timothy and Titus, and walking in such a calling that the Church feels there is a reason for the ordination in the community.

The first step in the ordination process is to be walking in such a way that your calling and godliness are known and recognized by others.

### **Step Two. Nomination and Acceptance**

Once a person is generally recognized in the public community for having a ministry and walking as a godly Christian, they may be nominated to Spirit & Truth Fellowship for ordination. Generally, anyone nominated for ordination has both a personal witness and a witness by others that it is proper. This can occur in two ways.

1. Self-selection
2. Being recommended by others who know the person well

The Board of Directors will review and approve all nominations. If a candidate is accepted, he or she can then enter the development phase of ministry.

### **Step Three: Development**

All persons entering the Development phase will be assigned an Ordination Adviser. Since all ordained ministers are a “total package” of godly body, godly soul, and godly spirituality, it is the role of the Adviser to monitor and assist the candidate towards fulfillment of their ordination requirements. We recognize that few people are ready to be ordained simply because they are operating their ministry well and are well liked by the community of believers. There are many facets of ministry and the life of an ordained minister requires mentoring, training, and study.

#### **Mentoring**

It is not the purpose of a mentoring program to turn out “cookie cutter” ministers, or to try to get all ministers to be equally good at all aspects of ministry. A good mentoring program recognizes the God-given ministry of the person and works to develop that. However, it also recognizes that there are certain aspects of ministry and personal behavior that all ministers need to attain. This is a time to concentrate on developing godly character and to work closely with others who can help strengthen any personal vulnerabilities or weaknesses. It should be noted that the majority of items listed in Timothy and Titus are character traits.

#### **Training**

Training is the development of those areas of knowledge and expertise specifically related to one’s personal gifts and calling. For instance, if someone is called as a Pastor, this time will be spent learning principles and techniques specific to proper pastoral care. Ideally, training will occur on the local level and with someone of the same calling.

#### **Study**

The Bible is our rule for faith and practice and, as such, all ministers must have a solid grasp on doctrinal matters. It is important for the function and future of Spirit & Truth Fellowship that our ministers understand what we believe and why. Since spiritual ignorance and biblical illiteracy go hand-in-hand, in this phase of development the candidate is required to study and demonstrate a solid grasp of the doctrinal positions of Spirit & Truth Fellowship. Additionally, the study phase goes beyond the mere recitation of facts and information, and requires that the candidate demonstrate the practical application and wisdom required to walk as an ordained minister.

### **Step Four: Ordination and Release**

Upon satisfactory completion of the above process, the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Ordination Board recognizes a candidate for ordination. The candidate is ordained to public ministry in a recognition ceremony that celebrates the person's gift and calling as a gift to the Body of Christ, and thereafter the individual is released for service.

### **Criteria for Ordination**

1. Satisfactory completion of the requirements of the recognition, nomination, development and accountability steps toward ordination.
2. Satisfactory demonstration of Biblical knowledge, Spirit & Truth Fellowship teachings, and other required texts in preparation for public ministry.
3. An identifiable ministry evidenced within the Spirit & Truth Fellowship faith community.
4. Character and lifestyle commensurate with the requirements for overseers and deacons according to 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9.
5. Full and open disclosure to the Ordination Board of any personal information relevant to establishing and maintaining authentic Christian character.
6. At least 25 years of age.
7. At least 5 years of faithful service in ministry within the Spirit & Truth Fellowship community of believers.

All nominations for ordination should be submitted to the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Home Office, to the attention of the Ordination Committee. Please direct any questions or needs for additional information to John Schoenheit (President), or Dan Gallagher (CEO).